

of the Drass River we reach the land of the Bhauttas. Thence the eastern frontier of Kashmir is formed by a mountain range which runs from Zoji La due south towards Kishtwar. Along this range in the east is the narrow valley of Wardwan inhabited by Kashmiris. Thus ancient Kashmir was the main valley of Kashmir surrounded by small hill chieftains mostly subject to the Kings of Kashmir. The Kingdom of Kashmir expanded far beyond its usual borders during the reign of Lalitaditya and stretched from Kanauj to Tokharistan which comprised Badakhshan and upper tracts of Upper Oxus. He also had a military treaty with Chinese against Tibet and in fact perished during one of his northern campaigns.

As far as Kashmiris themselves are concerned, they are more akin to Central Asian stock than to the people living in the south. People who have visited Tajikistan say that except language everything else is common between Kashmiris and Tajiks. Even Kashmir's great spiritual leader Mir Sayed Ali Hamadani, popularly known as Amir-e-Kabir or Shah-i-Hamadan is buried in Tajikistan. The present State of Jammu & Kashmir came into being in 1846 by the infamous Treaty of Amritsar. Ladakh had already been annexed to Dogra Empire by General Zorawar Singh and Kashmir was purchased along with its unfortunate inhabitants by them from the British.

In 1947 the dispute arose about the whole erstwhile princely State of Jammu & Kashmir and not only regarding the vale of Kashmir. During last 60 years due to extensive media coverage the entire territory is known as Kashmir and all the people residing therein are projected to be Kashmiris. Again at present attempts are being made to limit the entire problem to Kashmiris only who are supposed to be the valley residents. The people of the three distinct regions of the state may ultimately decide to live with either of the two dominions or even as an Independent State but that will not wipe out the distinct historical

identity of Kashmiris. Confusion has also been created by some people for various reasons about Kashmiris not being a separate Nation. The Cyclopaedia of Political Science states, 'A nation is an aggregation of men speaking the same language, having the same customs, and endowed with certain moral qualities which distinguish them from other groups of a like nature. It would follow from this definition that a nation is destined to form only one state, and that it constitutes one indivisible whole'. Other definitions are, 'a large body of people united by common descent, culture, or language, inhabiting a particular state or territory'. 'A large group of people of the same race who share the same language, traditions, and history, but who might not all live in one area'. 'People whose common identity creates a psychological bond and a political community. Their political identity usually comprises such characteristics as a common language, culture, ethnicity, and history.' (Encyclopaedia Britannica)

By all these definitions Kashmiris constitute a Nation. In fact both India and Pakistan do not constitute Nations as understood in terms of Political Science definitions of both the Nation as well as Nation States. These are modern entities created by artificial binding. European Union similarly does not constitute a Nation but a group of Nations which have come together for economic considerations. Similar can be the case for SAARC countries sometime in future. Whatever may be future dispensation of the State of Jammu & Kashmir or for that matter of the various countries in the Indian sub-continent or the entire South Asian Region, Kashmiris will continue to have their distinct identity which has been moulded over hundreds or rather thousands of years. If we have survived 5,000 years of history, we will definitely continue to do so in the future notwithstanding the temporary tribulations being faced by us at present.

9.

**KASHMIR'S MISFORTUNE, THE
CHRONIC INTERNECINE WARFARE**

The Kashmir 'Problem' was described in a previous article to be more than four centuries old, from the time the Kashmiris ceased to be citizens of an Independent Sovereign State. However, it needs to be emphasized that the 'Problem' has been to a great extent of our own making. From the earliest times Kashmir has faced infighting among the various claimants to political power. Even Kalhana in *Raj Tarangni* laments the misfortunes that befell the inhabitants of the valley because of the wars of succession which erupted from time to time among the early Hindu rulers.

Damaras, a class of feudal landlords, were always busy in making and unmaking ancient Kings of Kashmir. No King could survive without the help of these powerful barons. They belonged to different districts and had their homes in the most fertile cultivated portions of the valley. The entire narrative is full of instances where a King would have a fall as soon as he lost support of some of these powerful feudal lords. It was always the first task of a King to solicit support of the most powerful Damaras and also to suppress the rebellious ones. This continuous infighting often attracted foreign invaders to the valley.

In fact, the annexation of Kashmir by the Mughals which put an end to the Independent Sovereign State was a result of internecine warfare. The first major incursion was by Mirza Haider Dughlat through Zoji La pass. In July 1532 he came from Kashgar with Abu Said and his son Sikandar at the head of a large army. They easily subdued Ladakh and Baltistan. After hearing about the internecine warfare in Kashmir, he made a rapid advance towards the valley at the head of a force of 5,000 cavalry and infantry. Kashmiris were taken by surprise and in a course of few days; Dughlat's troops entered Srinagar in January, 1533. The city was looted and plundered.

However, Kashmiris organised their resistance under Kazi Chak and Abdul Magrey who united against a common foe. Dughlat's forces were hemmed in a narrow valley and he sued for peace. His forces were allowed to depart by the same way they had come, in May, 1533. However, taking full advantage of the internal fighting, Mirza Haider Dughlat was back in Kashmir in October 1540, through the Tosa Maidan Pass. He had been aided by Magrey clan who had sought aid from Humayun against persecutions by Kazi Chak. The main weakness from which Chaks suffered and which resulted in their downfall as well as which made Kashmir lose its sovereignty was their obsession to impose Shia doctrines over the people.

Mirza placed Nazuk Shah on the throne and carried on the administration in his name for 11 years. In the initial stages due to political expediency, he had been very liberal towards Shias but subsequently let loose an era of persecution and tyranny against them. To survive the turbulent Kashmiris, he made full use of the Shia-Sunni conflict which was at its peak during the rule of Chaks. However, this policy cost him both his position as well as his life! The self-respect of Kashmiris had been greatly wounded by the overbearing attitude of the various Mughal officers of

the Mirza. They again forgot for the time being their internal religious-cum-political differences and organised a strong uprising under Hussain Magrey. The rebels established their headquarter at Khanpur near Rajauri.

Mirza sent a strong army under the command of his cousin Qara Bahadur to subdue the rebellion but the force was defeated. Ladakhis killed Dughlat's Governor and made the garrison to flee to the valley. Similarly, the people of Pakhli drove out their Governor who was killed by Kashmiris along with his troops on entering the valley. There was a general uprising all over the Kingdom which unnerved Mirza. He rode to Khanpur at the head of a strong army to punish the insurgents but was killed during the night assault on the fort. This led to a widespread uprising throughout the valley and Mughal garrisons were overpowered and annihilated. Kashmir again reverted to an independent position.

Ghazi Chak became the first Chak ruler in 1561. He was known as a ruthless dispenser of justice and got his own son sentenced to death and executed for mortally attacking his uncle. However, the policy of persecuting Sunnis was continued by Chaks and ultimately resulted in Kashmir losing its independence. Yaqub Shah had let loose a ruthless policy of terror against the Sunnis. A saintly and pious person Qazi Musa was done to death on his refusal to mention the name of Hazrat Ali in all public prayers. Sunnis rose in revolt under the leadership of an eminent theologian Sheikh Yaqub Sarfi who was sent by Makhdoom Sahib with a group of advisors to invite Akbar to put an end to the chronic internecine warfare thereby closing the chapter of Kashmir's long independent status.

Towards the end of Mughal rule there was chaos and disorder in Kashmir. Abdul Mansur Safdar Jung, the Subhedar of Kashmir could hardly maintain any authority in the province. His deputy Afrasiyab Khan was

hard put to keep the turbulent nobles under check. He opened secret negotiations with Ahmad Shah Abdali and promised him all aid against the nominal Mughal ruler. In 1748 Ahmad Shah Abdali sent a strong Afghan force under Asmat Ullah Khan to occupy Kashmir. Even though the force was able to penetrate right up to Srinagar, it could not withstand the onslaught of the forces which Afrasiyab Khan had mustered. Asmat Ullah Khan was killed and his troops were scattered and annihilated.

In the meantime the situation in Kashmir had further deteriorated. There were incessant feuds among the followers of the nobles and Mughal governors. Alaqli Khan was sent as the Governor to bring order to the prevalent chaos. He appointed Mir Muqim Kanth, a Kashmiri, as his deputy. He found the treasury empty and in order to effect some economy, Mir Muqim disbanded a large number of troops which created disaffection in the army.

Abul Qasim Khan, taking advantage of the disaffection, won over the forces and drove away Mir Muqim Kanth and declared himself as an independent ruler of Kashmir. He indulged in insensate cruelty and there was widespread distress in the land. As soon as Ahmad Shah Abdali was back in Lahore after a victorious campaign, Mir Muqim Kanth and Khwaja Zahir Didamari, the two influential leaders of Kashmir, distressed at the depredations of Abul Qasim, approached Abdali and induced him to invade Kashmir to bring it under his rule. Abdali gladly accepted the invitation and in 1753 sent a strong force of Afghans under Abdullah Khan Ishk Aqasi. Abul Qasim was defeated after a battle of fifteen days and was arrested and taken to Kabul. Ishk Aqasi entered Srinagar in triumph and planted the Afghan flag on the ramparts of Akbar's fort at Nagar Nagar, and thus the rule of Mughal emperors in Kashmir was brought to an end.

The Afghan rule in Kashmir which continued for 67

years was probably the worst ever seen by the inhabitants of the valley. While inviting the Afghans to take over the administration of the valley, the Kashmiris had mistaken them for a branch of the civilised and humane Mughal emperors of India. They had hoped that after the break-up of the Central Mughal Power, Ahmad Shah Abdali and his successors would give them a stable administration. They could never imagine that all the beauty and nobility for which Kashmir and its people were known throughout the world would be ruthlessly wiped off under their rule.

A Kashmiri poet has lamented this as: I enquired of the gardener the cause of the destruction of the garden. Drawing a deep sigh he replied, 'It is the Afghans who did it!' Kashmiris got a rude shock when they witnessed the first acts of barbarity at the hands of their new masters. Abdullah Khan Ishk Aqasi let loose a reign of terror as soon as he entered the valley. His soldiers who were accustomed to looting and murdering the subjected people, amassed riches by the foulest means possible. The exactions of the Afghan rulers make people shudder even now! There are many stories about Afghan rule still popular among the people of the valley. It is said that a delegation of Kashmiris went to Kabul to request the King for a merciful governor. He asked them to choose any of his wazirs sitting in his court. They pointed towards an elderly pious man with white flowing beard and a tasbeeh in hand. The King readily agreed and sent Kakkar Khan with them. They brought him in a procession to Kashmir.

As they reached Baramulla a funeral was passing by. The governor asked them to stop. Kashmiris were happy thinking the pious man is going to offer fateh to the departed soul. On the contrary he asked them to open the coffin and bit the ear of the deceased and shouted, 'Tell the dead in the next world that Kakkar Khan has arrived in Kashmir!' The other story is about Jabbar Khan the last governor. Someone

had told him that the Pandits believe that snow falls invariably on Shivaratri night (13th of the dark night of Phalguna, February-March). To test this he ordered that the festival be observed in the next month, Asarh, June-July. It so happened that due to extra-ordinary cooling of the atmosphere by a very heavy rain, snow flakes fell on this night also. The Kashmiri bards then sang, 'Wuchton yih Jabbar, jandah, Haras tih karun wandah. ('Look at Jabbar, the wretch, even summer he turned into winter!')

Towards the end of Afghan rule, the Sikh power was rising in Punjab. Due to the exactions of Afghans, Kashmiris turned their wistful eyes towards Sikhs and mothers used a lullaby, 'Deva yiyih Sikha raj tarit kyah' ('would that the rule of the Sikhs would cross over to us'), to put their children to sleep. Kashmiris as usual made attempts to invite Sikhs to get rid of Afghans. Pandit Birbal Dhar an important Hindu noble and official escaped along with his son Raja Kak Dhar to Ranjit Singh's court to induce him to invade Kashmir. His wife and daughter in law were left behind. The wife committed suicide but the daughter in law was arrested and taken to Kabul. Birbal Dhar was able to persuade Maharaja Ranjit Singh to send an army of 30,000 troops to Kashmir. Jabbar Khan was defeated and hastily fled to Kabul. Thus Kashmir fell into the hands of Sikhs. On hearing the news, Maharaja Ranjit Singh bestowed robes of honour and other favours on Raja Kak Dhar and other nobles. Lahore was illuminated for three days.

Again Kashmiris were in for a rude shock. The Sikh period proved worst of all.

Muslims were subjected to the harshest possible treatment. The Jama Masjid at Srinagar was closed to public for prayers. Muslims were forbidden to say Azan. In fact one over-zealous commander Phula Singh trained his guns on Shah Hamadan mosque to blow it up on the plea that it was

built over a Hindu temple. It was due to the intervention of Birbal Dhar that the mosque was saved. However, the Sikh commander declared Pathar Masjid and several other mosques as the property of the State. Cow slaughter was declared a crime punishable by death and many people accused of killing cows were publicly hanged.

There was no rule of law. Even at present when Kashmiris refer to lawless and authoritarian behaviour, they call it 'Sikhashahi'. Fortunately the Sikh rule lasted only 27 years! Kashmiris did not have much to do to get Dogras to rule over them. It was a gift of the British. For about a century Kashmiris remained under Dogras. It was only after many generations had seen untold trials and tribulations that the Kashmiris finally decided to raise a voice for their basic human rights. However, the 'Freedom Movement' which started in earnest in 1931 got again enveloped in chronic internecine warfare. After only six years there were two opposing view points. The nationalists or 'Shers', the followers of Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, popularly called the Lion of Kashmir, who wanted an independent and secular Naya (New) Kashmir and the staunch Muslims or Bakras, the followers of Moulvi Yousaf Shah, who wanted to join Pakistan.

As a repetition of history, each group sought assistance from outside Kashmir from the two neighbouring countries as a result of which they got divided into two halves. The emancipation or liberation for which they had been pinning for centuries again eluded them because of their own infighting. The same story continues on both sides of the divide. There are umpteen parties with umpteen agendas, each claiming to represent Kashmiris and each promising to get them a place of honour and dignity. All of them talk of an abstract goal of 'Azadi' but are not able to define in explicit terms what 'Azadi' would mean for a common Kashmiri and how he will get it? There

seem to be dozens of leaders but no followers!

If only they all would delve into the past and study the history of Kashmir through the ages of trials and tribulations, they would have a definite and a well defined goal with a clear and specific blue-print to achieve it. History is replete with instances how in the time of crisis Kashmiris did forget all their differences irrespective of caste, creed, and religion and joined hands to resist the invaders. They did succeed in chasing out the most powerful invaders but ultimately lost because of the might and strength of the outsiders who were able to exploit the chronic internecine warfare to the fullest extent. It is said that those who do not learn from the history are condemned to repeat it. After more than four centuries of exactions which had become a part of their lives, Kashmiris instead of getting released and liberated have got themselves fully entangled in a spiders web from which there seems to be no escape.

There is still time and there is still a chance for them to reach the place of 'honour and dignity' which has eluded them so long, if only they could sink all their differences created by the chronic internecine warfare and let the ultimate goal rather than personalities lead them to it. If they don't, they will cease to be a nation and will be consigned to the pages of history!

10.

KASHMIR'S LEADERSHIP VACUUM

The present mess in Kashmir is attributed by many to a crisis of leadership. Total absence of leaders with conviction, ideals, and a vision for future. It is alleged that Kashmir has been facing this vacuum of genuine and honest leadership right from the start of the present movement in 1931. Normally for a people who have been living for centuries under the worst kind of oppression in history it is difficult to produce honest and genuine leaders. It is because of the exceptional resilience and adaptability that Kashmiris have survived so long. In such worst conditions it is unrealistic to expect them to have the virtues of a free people.

However, from time to time there have been rebellions against the outside invaders which have been ruthlessly crushed. Had Kashmiris got a breathing space between the arrivals of different invaders, they might have had a chance to throw up some good leaders. The continuous outside rule did not provide any opportunity for regaining the virtues which had been lost over a prolonged spell of colonial rule.

The movement of 1931 had thrown up a new leadership which had challenged the autocratic rule. Had this lead-

ership got the opportunity in 1947 for a free and unrestrained healthy growth like the rest of the sub-continent, there may have been a dramatic change. Unfortunately, the entire movement was deliberately scuttled and Kashmiris were thrown into such a jam that even after half a century they find no escape. Both the countries in their respective parts facilitated growth of only that type of leadership which would toe their line irrespective of the fact whether they were popular or not. They set up a role model for leaders in line with their colonial agenda. All attempts for the growth of true and honest leadership through a democratic process were overtly and covertly scuttled.

The upheaval of 1990 which was an open mass rebellion did throw up a totally new and young leadership after rejecting the earlier traditional leaders who had failed to deliver due to their own human weaknesses. However, in a situation of trilateral conflict it is impossible for an honest, genuine, and popular leadership to survive openly. No sooner were the leaders identified; they were then ruthlessly liquidated one by one. This was especially true of the leaders with independent thinking. The mainstream leadership was in the field purely for their own limited goals. They did not side with Delhi because of convictions or ideals but for their own selfish motives. They were filling the vacuum created by the disassociation of the majority from the mainstream.

The only variety of leadership which was allowed to grow and flourish from the alienated majority was the one which had no originality and followed the traditional style of delivering speeches to enclosed audiences in mosques and other similar institutions. They preached abstract ideas and projected confusing goals. The maximum achievement they could be credited with was to give calls to the masses in support of their demands by observing total shut downs (locally called 'Hartals').

In the absence of a blue print to achieve the goals preached by them, the people started getting disillusioned and even the shut downs started losing their effectiveness thereby rendering this type of leadership irrelevant. Moreover, both the classes of traditional leaders became fond of goodies. Mainstream group receiving these from this side and the opponents receiving the same from the other side. Material considerations weighed more than convictions and ideals. Failure of the traditional leadership to deliver and fulfil people's aspirations resulted in the youth taking up the extreme step. They started with practice before preaching and became overnight heroes. However, they had to face a two pronged assault. This side did not tolerate any dissension from the mainstream whatsoever and the other side forced them to follow their own stream. Thus the independent local stream reflecting popular sentiment and aspirations had no chance of survival. They again went into the hard crusted shell in which they had been living for centuries. In other words, the leadership went underground.

Kashmiris are considered to be intellectually superior to other people in the sub-continent. In fact, Kashmiri Pandits considered themselves to be the highest class of Brahmans in the entire country. The intelligent Kashmiri leader has become invisible. He is spread all over the society among lawyers, among doctors, among teachers, among students, among government officers and officials including those in different police and security forces. It is not possible to sustain an underground movement without the sympathy and active support of the masses. The incidents occurring from time to time do not occur on the spur of the moment without any planning but have a definite pattern. There is an invisible collective leadership sympathising, supporting, and guiding the underground activities.

A part of this leadership is now in different jails for more than sixteen years. The over ground traditional type media projected and state protected leaders are only the visible dependent face. They are relevant as long as they reflect and project the popular sentiments and aspirations. The moment they try to deviate from that, they become irrelevant. So it will not be correct to say that there is a leadership vacuum in Kashmir.

Earlier Kashmiris were fond of a single charismatic person. They had taken the personality cult to the extreme which was evident from the popular slogan that whatever the leader does we follow it. It was a totally blind faith in one person which has been in reality the main cause of the present mess. A single shepherd leading the dumb driven sheep from one pasture to another. If this single person was tamed, everything could be managed. But not now! Kashmiris may still be like sheep but they are intelligent and experienced sheep now. They have become selective in choosing their own shepherds. The present negotiations and interactions are taking place only with the traditional motivated mainstream leadership. Even the visible over ground leaders claiming to represent the people's aspirations have not been tapped. Not to mention the real invisible leaders really controlling the movement and calling the shots. Thus any solution arrived at in such a set up has the least chances of success.

The only correct and sensible approach would be to bring the true and genuine leadership out of the hard crusted shell. This can be done through an impartial and transparent referendum held under neutral international machinery. The referendum would not be to find the solution but to identify the people who can help find the solution. The sooner it is done, the better it would be for an accelerated final solution of this mind boggling problem.

11.

THE ENIGMATIC LION OF KASHMIR

The Lion is not the part of wild life in Kashmir. We have snow leopards, leopards, and panthers. However, there was only one 'Lion of Kashmir', Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, a historical enigma- very difficult to fully understand! The tallest leader, who, according to Dr. Josef Korbel, rose like a morning star but fell like a meteor. There are many views about his personality. Some claim him to be the greatest leader of Kashmiris while as some pronounce him as a traitor who betrayed Kashmiris and sold them into Indian slavery.

The story of his life is the greatest tragedy of Kashmir. He was a typical Kashmiri with all the failings which most of us have acquired over centuries of foreign occupation. He was bold and outspoken. A simple and straightforward person but had a much exaggerated ego. Like any other Kashmiri, he too had some human weaknesses. He gave a lead to the oppressed Kashmiris and took the autocratic Maharaja head-on. It was because of his lead in the early thirties that the Kashmiris woke up from slumber and started their freedom struggle. His towering personality gave stature and momentum to the freedom movement. He suffered many incarcerations but did not give up. He had

dreamt of restoring the ancient glory of Kashmir and in the heart of his hearts wanted it to be an independent country. However, he wanted to realise the fruits of his struggle in his own lifetime.

It was probably because of this that he changed the Muslim Conference into National Conference to avoid a communal clash between the oppressed Muslim Kashmiris and the autocratic Hindu Maharaja. It was primarily the Muslims of Kashmir who had faced exactions at the hands of the Dogra rulers and changing the overall face of the movement was a tactical move. Jinnah may have understood Sheikh Abdullah's moves better and both might have clicked but for the Sayeds, Maulanas, Sardars, and Chowdhrys who felt threatened by Kashmiri domination.

It is these vested interests who sabotaged possible understanding between the two Muslim leaders. Moreover, Sheikh was wary of the Punjabis who called Kashmiris 'Hathu'. In his simplicity he had, unfortunately for him, placed total faith in Nehru taking him to be a true nationalist. Ultimately it was Nehru who betrayed him and shattered all his dreams in 1953. More tragic for him was the stab in the back by Bakshi, his grass roots organiser. If Bakshi had not deserted him, he would have given a tough fight to India. His greatest act has been the momentous decision of giving the land to the tiller without any compensation to the land lords and freezing of all the debts of poor farmers, an action still without a parallel in the whole sub-continent. Sheikh had also introduced Kashmiri language in schools from the primary level. Without knowing and respecting one's mother tongue, one can never be a true nationalist.

Having been himself a teacher, he had the greatest regard for the educators. He had even initiated efforts for making Kashmir self-sufficient in food by instituting a number of stringent measures which had made him somewhat

unpopular with the masses. However, Bakshi immediately on taking over reversed all these measures. It is alleged by some that Nehru from the very beginning had the idea of using Sheikh Abdullah to annexe Kashmir.

He made and executed his plans accordingly and the Lion of Kashmir was taken for a ride due to his simplicity and a very bloated ego. As per Korbelt and Alistair Lamb, the plans for annexing Kashmir were made and executed with a finesse by the powerful leaders of India with the connivance of the departing British, and Sheikh Abdullah had no inkling of these, but was simply being used to legitimatise the same.

Even the very basis of the accession has been questioned by some authors. A few go to the extent of claiming that the Maharaja, who was under tremendous pressure, never signed the instrument of accession! During his entire political career involving 22 years in prison, Sheikh made many goof ups and turn rounds. Most of these were overlooked and forgiven by the people who had an unshakeable faith in his leadership. However, in 1975 he made the worst blunder of his life by accepting the power. Nehru had only betrayed and incarcerated him but Indira Gandhi humiliated and totally destroyed him. She cut him down from being the tallest leader of Kashmir to a small time politician hankering after the loaves of office. Many say that he never wanted to compromise but the debacle of Bangladesh and the pressure of his family forced him to surrender. Others say that he was fatigued by a long struggle. This decision proved to be his nemesis.

Indira Gandhi's move ensured that instead of a colossal shrine thronged by people, his grave has to be protected by the security forces from the very people who loved and virtually worshiped him. Towards the last days of his life he was very sad and pathetic. He was regretting his decision and wanted to undo the wrong he had done

to his people. According to some persons who were close to him, he would say that India has swallowed Kashmiris but they are stuck in its throat. They should try and ensure that it vomits them out. He would be sometimes very sad and would often break down and cry. In 1982 he got a booklet published under the signatures of one of his ministers which stated that India was trying to convert the Muslim majority into a minority and Kashmiris should beware of that. His attempt at introducing the Resettlement Act was a belated desperate measure to ensure the safe guarding of the interests of Kashmiris.

His conscience was pricking him and he wanted to do something to redeem his mistakes but his advancing age with all his ailments did not give him a chance to do that. One would have expected his progeny to complete his unfinished agenda of redeeming his historical mistakes but they compounded these further instead. They did not even bother to celebrate his centenary. The most ungrateful act was from the Indian Government who did not even care to confer a posthumous award on him. They rather tried to gradually obliterate his memory and deliberately omitted mentioning his name.

Kashmiris have always regretted why could not their Sheikh Abdullah have the strength and courage to be like Omar Mukhtar, the 'Lion of the Desert' of Libya? What forced him to be instead a confused and fatigued 'Messiah'? History alone will judge.

Till that time he will continue to remain an enigma!

12.

MUSHARRAF, A MODERN KAUTALIYA

Kautaliya, a most learned high caste Brahmin, also known as Chanakya or Visnu Gupt, was a minister of Chandra Gupt Maurya, the famous Hindu King of ancient India. He wrote a classic treatise on the state craft called the '*Arthshashtra*', which is an equivalent of the European work on the subject called the '*Prince*' written by Machiavelli. This treatise is the most comprehensive and exhaustive work on all aspects of governance, diplomacy, war, and other related things which a ruler must know and follow to ensure success of his rule. The Indian Military Academy uses it as one of the text books in the courses prescribed for the officers trained there.

The Indian Government has honoured Kautaliya by naming the diplomatic enclave in New Delhi as Chanakyapuri. It seems President Musharraf has very thoroughly studied both the '*Arthshashtra*' as well as the '*Prince*' and is putting into actual practice the guidelines contained in these works. His actions in dealing with the crisis in his country and his diplomatic moves abroad would surely qualify him to be called a 'Modern Kautaliya' in a positive sense.

Within Pakistan, he has been the only leader who has taken the Sardars, feudal barons, tribal warlords, and waderas head on. He has cut most of them to size. He has fixed all the local tribal chiefs in Waziristan while at the same time he has entered into an agreement with them for denying shelter to foreign elements belonging to Al Qaeda. Taliban, who have the same origin as Pakhtoons, could be tolerated.

They are indistinguishable from the local residents in the border areas. Nawab Akbar Khan Bugti was liquidated in a lightening operation. The General has shown that he is dead serious when it comes to the running of the writ of his Government. He means serious business. Baluchistan did not break away as feared by many within and outside Pakistan. Rather people have started forgetting Bugti, who will soon be obliterated from the history.

The traditional leaders like 'Nawaz Sharief' and 'Benazir Bhutto' have been reduced to non-entities. They have no chance of returning or participating in political activities till the General is in command. The fiery religious leaders have been somewhat tamed and are being preached 'Enlightened Moderation' and 'Progressive Islam'. They too have lost their punch and are unable to inflame the people's passions like earlier times.

Being a trained commando, the General has been able to tackle many fronts at one and the same time. He has made himself indispensable to the West in its fight against Al Qaeda.

At the same time he has kept his options open in case of Taliban resurgence to secure his northern flank. He has arrested the economic downslide of Pakistan towards being a failed state and has succeeded in motivating appreciable investments from abroad. The foreign exchange reserves, which had gone as low as a billion dollars have

gone up more than a dozen fold. Having realised the basic fact that nothing can work in Pakistan without Army, he has kept it on his right side. He knows that as long as he is in uniform and the Army is in good humour, he can take head on any one and any thing within or outside Pakistan. He is also confident that as long as USA is on his side, he is safe against all odds including from within the Army itself.

In diplomacy, he has no parallel in the entire history of Pakistan. The most recent example is his latest unprecedented and out of the box proposals on Kashmir. The ball is once again in India's court. The General seems to be using most of the inputs provided in the chapter on covert operations in Arthshashtra. This judicious use of Arthshastra begins with the Kargil Operation when very stealthy the SSG (Special Services Group, an elite commando formation of Pakistan Army) of which he has been a Commanding Officer, occupied the strategic heights overlooking Srinagar-Leh highway. While the operation was going on, Nawaz Sharief was hugging Vajpayee in Lahore! If the Americans had not exerted maximum pressure to force surrender by Nawaz Sharief, the sub-continent could have seen the 'Fourth Round' between the two antagonists which would have changed the geography of the area drastically.

Musharraf never forgave Nawaz Sharief for this humiliating let down of his brainchild. The General has alleged that the Americans threatened to bomb Pakistan to the Stone Age after 9/11 if it did not co-operate. It is because of this threat that he had to agree to all their demands in order to save Pakistan. Did Nawaz Sharief receive a stronger threat at the time of the Kargil Operation, as he buckled under much more quickly without getting any thing in return?

Agra was one more brilliant coup by the General. He hijacked the entire media and had his view point beamed live all over the world. It was a major diplomatic win for him. After the red carpet treatment given to him by the In-

dian leaders, they did not expect him to be so blunt and straight forward. They were thrown into a total mess by the anti-climax in which the conference ended. He administered the coup de grace at Kathmandu by extending a hand of friendship to an utterly surprised Vajpayee who had no alternative but to get up in haste to grasp it. It was the most brilliant way of throwing the ball once again in the Indian court, which was seen live by millions of people all over the world.

Vajpayee in 2003 stole a march over him by extending his hand of friendship from Kashmir itself, which the General had termed as the 'Core Issue' between the two countries. He had no alternative but to grasp it with both hands. Then came the 'Confidence Building Measures', which were agreed to and implemented one after the other, even though half-heartedly. On one hand the General was stressing the centrality of the Kashmir problem and the aspirations of the Kashmiris, while as on the other hand he was apparently showing great flexibility in solving this intractable problem.

In slow doses he started climbing down from the rigid stance which his country had been following for half a century. First UN Resolutions were given up, total Independence was ruled out, borders were proposed to be made irrelevant, and finally Pakistan was declared to be prepared even to give up total claim on Kashmir, emotionally termed in the past to be its 'Jugular Vein'! The strategy seems to be two fold. One is to convert Kashmir from being an issue involving territory to a problem concerning the future of its people. If the people could be offered self-rule under the joint supervision of India and Pakistan, then the claim to the territory could be given up. Secondly, the International Opinion is being shown that Pakistan is offering the extreme and total flexibility in resolving the decade's old dispute simply in pursuit of world peace. It is India which

is being totally unresponsive and intransigent.

The Indian Media is euphoric about General Musharraf being prepared to give up Pakistan claim on Kashmir through his new four point proposals. The proposal is much more complicated than seems on the face of it. First the territory of Kashmir needing a solution has to be identified. This area has to be demilitarised in stages, and forces sent back to garrisons. Self-rule is to be given to the inhabitants of the identified areas and the whole process has to be supervised by a mechanism involving India, Pakistan, and Kashmiris. No doubt the blue print for a way to the ultimate solution is good. The General may be sincere in his approach for peace in the sub-continent but the million dollar question is whether we have the leaders on all sides with the political will to take it forward?

For the last 59 years in spite of international pressure, both the countries have miserably failed in reducing forces on both the sides of the Line of Control. They have rather increased these to an unprecedented level especially on the Indian side, making these the highest ever in any part of the world in comparison to local population. Best efforts from the Indian Government have failed to make Kashmiris agree for any type of self-rule with autonomy within the constitution of India, which the General now proposes. Finally bringing all the three parties together to supervise such an arrangement seems a utopian dream. It seems the General had been frustrated by his failure to bring a semblance of unity among the politicians heading the freedom struggle in Kashmir.

By threatening to out rightly dump them; he may succeed in forging unity among these pro-freedom groups for their very survival and make them intensify their struggle independently. Interestingly all the hardliners as well as some of the moderates from this camp have straight away rejected the General's proposals and some have even

denounced him.

On the other hand even the mainstream hardliners like Bharatiya Janta Party have rejected these proposals. Being Chanakya's true followers they probably understand these diplomatic moves much better than anybody else! The funny part is that most of the regional pro-India parties have welcomed these proposals. This may be to safeguard their own future in the ultimate set up which may emerge, as well as have a piece of the final pie. It is very difficult to understand the General's mind. Is he so naive that he will totally disregard all that he has been saying so far about Kashmir and Kashmiris? Is he totally out of touch with the present situation in Kashmir and is oblivious to the pulse of the people?

Or is he being too shrewd and clever and is telling India to sort out the intractable problem with Kashmiris directly on its own (which it will not be able to do within its presently declared working contours within the framework of the constitution of India) while he takes pleasure in watching India's discomfiture?

Well, it is after a long time that Delhi is facing someone on the other side of the border who is sharper than a traditional 'Brahmin'. After all he too was born in Delhi itself!

13.

PRESIDENT MUSHARRAF'S FOUR POINT PROPOSAL

President Pervez Musharraf in a recent TV interview outlined a four point proposal to solve, what he was earlier fond of calling, the 'Core Issue' of Kashmir. The first step in this direction is supposed to identify 'Kashmir'. He did not mention the State of Jammu & Kashmir which is the present entity under dispute, but specifically referred to Kashmir only. From 1947, since the time of the start of the present problem, Kashmir does not encompass what historically used to be known as the Kingdom of Kashmir.

Ptolemy's Kaspeira, Samos' Kaspeiroi, Herodotus' Kaspatyros, and Hiuen Tsang's Kia-shi-mi-lo was a different country altogether than the present Kashmir. That country is what one may call the 'Greater Kashmir'. These days the name Kashmir is supposed to denote the erstwhile princely State of Jammu & Kashmir. The present Kashmir comprises five regions, Kashmir Valley, Jammu, Ladakh, 'Azad' Kashmir, and Northern Areas.

The State of Jammu & Kashmir as it existed in 1947 was a colonial creation. The five regions were clobbered together by the Dogra Maharajas by purchase and conquest in which they were assisted by the British. In ancient times Kashmir was famous for a number of things in-

cluding learning, lofty houses, saffron, honey, grapes, and was known world over as the most enchanting country. For last more than half century it has unfortunately become known for all the wrong reasons; dangerous conflicts, rebellions and uprisings, violence, and a host of other events mostly tragic in nature.

Historically the 'country' of Kashmir kept on expanding and contracting from time to time depending upon the local rulers some of whom were fond of conquering and subduing neighbouring Kingdoms. However, the Kingdom of Kashmir itself remained the valley with its surrounding Kashmiri speaking pockets guarded by the lofty mountains. The northern Kingdoms of Ladakh did have a continuous interaction with the valley because of the Central Asian trade routes as well as politico-religious tie ups involving Tibet, China, and Buddhism. There was hardly any regular interaction between the rulers of Jammu and the Valley of Kashmir in ancient times. On the contrary Jammu has been more associated with the mountainous Chamba region of neighbouring State of Himachal Pradesh and the plains of Punjab.

The peripheral settlements of Kashmiri speaking people in the form of small Kingdoms acted as guardians of the Valley. These also acted as sanctuaries for the rebels and fugitives from the palace intrigues as mentioned by Kalhana in *Raj Tarangni*. The people living in these mountainous regions have always been hardy, chivalrous, and tougher than the Valley residents. Parontsa (present Poonch) and Kashtavata (present Kishtwar) are repeatedly mentioned in *Raj Tarangni*. So are the areas of Dards towards Gurais and Tilel which too were frequently used by Kashmiri rebels as sanctuaries.

During the centuries of subjugation, the valley dwellers were subdued and turned into docile morons. However, the mountain dwellers remained as rebellious as ever.

In fact, they represent the true Kashmiris both physically as well as culturally. Their language, their customs, and even their dresses in some of the remotest parts like the wadhwan valley are truly belonging to ancient Kashmir. Apart from being the guardians of the *Raj Tarangni's* 'Davaras' (passes), they settled in these areas after migrating from the valley during many natural calamities. As long as we had the sovereign rulers from the valley, there was interaction with these peripheral pockets.

However, after the centre of power shifted outside the valley, these people got stuck in their remote corners. The continuous interaction the valley had with outsiders during the foreign rule changed the people residing in the valley a lot but the mountain dwellers remained in their original form. Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah attempted to reconnect these earliest Kashmiris with the valley by initiating construction of a number of road links. These included the Daksum-Chatroo link across Simthan pass to connect Kashmir to Kishtwar and the Mughal road across the Pir Pantsal pass to connect Poonch to the Valley. However, for unknown reasons these projects did not take off as fast as they should have. Linking of all these areas would have revived the historical and true 'Greater Kashmir' which is now being attempted to be identified. If we consider the present 'Kashmir' which embraces the whole State with a view to identify the problem areas, then the task is a pretty long one.

Each region has its own peculiarity and history. It is a complete diversity which has a unity imposed externally. First it was the uniting force of the Dogras and after 1947 it has been the writ of Delhi and Islamabad respectively for the areas under their control.

The second step pertains to 'Demilitarization' of identified 'Kashmir'. According to him 'Demilitarization' would mean withdrawing of troops from all the civilian areas and

keeping these in two to three main garrisons, leaving the maintenance of internal security to local police. He probably forgot to mention about the repeal of the draconian legislations giving unbridled powers to these forces in dealing with civilian insurgency. The practical implementation of the measure can be judged only after the actual ground situation of the security forces is considered. For all practical purposes, Kashmir valley or rather the whole State is at present like an oversized cantonment. As soon as one enters the State through the gateway of Lakhanpur, the Security Forces camps start on both sides of the highway. Main concentration starts from Samba onwards. Nearing Jammu it increases substantially and from Tawi crossing the entire river bank up to the bridge is with the Security Forces.

After leaving the city, the same scene starts from Nagrota and culminates into a massive presence in Udhampur, which is virtually a Security Forces City. From here onwards every township on the highway has Security Forces and paramilitary camps though with a smaller strength. After crossing the tunnel, the concentration increases from Qazigund onwards and the biggest ever presence is at the entrance to the city of Srinagar in the Badamibagh Cantonment which is virtually a city in itself. It is complete in every respect with residential areas, schools, hospitals, shopping areas, and recreational places.

Apart from the main cantonment there are other smaller ones as also the headquarters of RR (Rashtriya Rifles, the counter insurgency force) in different districts. In the city itself there is huge presence in different parts of both Security Forces and paramilitary forces. Apart from this there are smaller detachments of paramilitary forces guarded by bunkers and surrounded by barbed wire in almost all civilian localities of both old and new city housed in migrant houses, guest houses, and hotels. Every major road

crossing has pill boxes with machine guns. After leaving the city and proceeding towards Uri, one observes that the entire highway and all the towns en route have Security Forces and Paramilitary establishments. Similar situations are in all tourist resorts and other district headquarters. In proportion to the local population, it must be the largest concentration of security forces anywhere in the world. The Srinagar Airport which is the first entry of an outsider to the valley is in fact a military air base. Only a small portion of the airfield is used by the civilians.

As the plane comes in to land, the only thing visible is rows upon rows of military aircraft and anti aircraft guns and missiles. One has the eerie feeling of landing in a war zone. The entry and exit from the airport remind one of a most high security prison with high steel gates, rolls upon rolls of barbed wire and security pill boxes and bunkers with machine guns. Now take the major highways and roads leading to some resorts and other important places. These are all guarded by security forces (ROP, road opening parties) on a daily basis. Soldiers are deployed after every hundred meters or so, on all such roads.

It involves deployment of thousands of troops everyday. Apart from this one can observe foot patrols of army and paramilitary forces everywhere, in towns, villages and almost every locality of the city. Another common sight are armoured vehicles moving continuously on all important roads, streets and sometimes even inside narrow lanes. The most awesome are the jumbo size anti-mine vehicles of the Security Forces. These are really frightening and one tries one's best to keep away from these.

The status of official buildings and even public offices is well known. These look more like high security establishments than public facilities. In some of the Civil Lines areas where top functionaries of the Government reside

almost all buildings are very well protected. These do not look like private residences of city dwellers but resemble mini forts. Added to this Security Forces and paramilitary presence are the local police with their hundreds of security vehicles. According to an estimate there are more than 5,000 security vehicles in Kashmir alone. The strength of local police exceeds a hundred thousand men. In normal circumstances, the security forces are governed by their own laws within their own establishments and are subject to all civilian laws outside their own barracks. However, the two draconian legislations, 'Armed Forces Special Powers Act' and the 'Disturbed Areas Act' have delegated to security forces such vast and unquestionable powers that the entire valley and its peripheral areas resemble a totalitarian police state.

The writ of the security forces runs in every sphere of day to day life. They get preference over every thing due to 'Security Reasons' and for safeguarding the 'National Interest'. Their actions are above local laws. They can violate all traffic restrictions and regulations and no one has the courage to challenge or stop them. Slowly they are outnumbering the locals in many places. Kashmiris are now used to their overwhelming presence and do not even notice it. However, for outsiders especially from Europe and America, such a large presence of gun toting uniformed soldiers makes them somewhat uncomfortable. They feel that they have landed in a war zone! There is always a debate about the actual number of troops in Kashmir. Some even put the number at a million troops of all kind.

The concentration of such a large force creates tension and stress among the local population as well as the security forces themselves. During last decade and a half the stress related illness among the civilian population has gone up over a hundred times. Compared to few thousand cases before the turmoil, now it is reported that the

number of patients with psychosomatic disorders and other stress related problems is few hundred thousand. Among the forces themselves there have been numerous cases of suicide and fratricide. On average 30 to 40 cases every year has gone up to 140. The prominent human rights activist Gautam Nawlakha, in a recent seminar on human rights held in Srinagar, said that the Government of India every now and then claims that the number of militants has come down drastically over the years, but still the concentration of the security forces personnel is the same. He added that this shows they are here to control the population that is regarded as rebellious because they are demanding their right to self determination.

There is a general feeling that this large force is not to keep militants at bay but to prevent a mass upsurge resembling the open revolt of 1990 when millions came on roads demanding 'Azadi'. It is because of this that all civilian areas have been put under a cordon of bunkers and pill boxes. No civilian gatherings for any reason whatsoever are allowed any where in the valley. In view of the above analysis of the security situation, it is difficult to imagine a way forward. It can only happen if the two leaders make some bold and drastic decisions.

The third step in the formula for the solution of Kashmir problem moots devolution of 'Self Governance' for the 'Identified' Kashmir after its demilitarisation. He did not specify exactly what is meant by 'Self Governance'. Neither did he mention about the methodology to achieve it and the parameters under which it would function. He vaguely hinted about some type of self-rule with autonomy. Probably his intention was to make a bold and unconventional suggestion, the technical details of which could be worked out on the ground after an agreement is reached.

In fact, it seems the most urgent need is for 'Good

Governance' of the State rather than 'Self Governance'. One of the contributing factors in creating the present mess in Kashmir has been the 'Mis-Governance'. However, at this stage it may be useful to analyse the 'Governance' which different parts of the State have experienced during last half century under the patronage of the two neighbouring countries. Let us begin with the Northern Areas under the administrative control of Pakistan. Before 1947 this area was known as Gilgit Agency and was administered by the British directly. It had been taken by them on lease from the Maharaja and had functioned as an out post against the possible expansion of Russia's Czarist Empire over the Pamirs. At the time of partition, the local garrison, consisting of the Gilgit Scouts working directly under the British Officers and consisting mostly of locals, revolted and declared its allegiance to Pakistan. They hardly knew at that time into what mess they were getting into.

The area was formally joined to Pakistan by Karachi Pact between the Governments of Pakistan and 'Azad' Kashmir. The locals of the area compare this pact with the Treaty of Amritsar. Since joining Pakistan, these areas have virtually been ruled as a colony. These neither function as part of the Pakistan Administered Kashmir nor as a full fledged province of Pakistan. It is like a Union Territory without any significant participation of the locals. There is a strong movement for Bloaristan in the entire area. Sectarian violence, which in fact is a clash between the locals and Pathan settlers from North Western Frontier Province, has been quite wide spread and almost a regular feature of the area. This part of Kashmir has had neither 'Self Governance' nor 'Good Governance'. What type of 'Self Governance' would the people of this area want? This can only be answered by them through their genuine and popular leaders if given a chance!

Next let us consider the Pakistan Administered Kashmir also known as 'Azad' Kashmir, which is in fact

neither 'Azad' nor Kashmir! It is mostly a non-Kashmiri speaking hilly area inhabited by potoharis and paharis. This area too has been under the virtual control of Islamabad. Main power rests with the Minister of Kashmir Affairs in Islamabad. Had the Pakistan Government made it 'Azad' in the true sense in 1947 itself, there would have been no Kashmir problem now. They could have made it fully independent with a defence treaty with its genuinely elected Government to legalise stationing of their regular army in the area. They could also have got it UN membership.

India would not have been able to prevent the part under its control from joining the truly independent Kashmir for very long. The people in this area also desire more freedom from Pakistani control. They have been advising Kashmiris from the valley to opt for totally independent Kashmir rather than accession to Pakistan. However, there is not a very strong movement for separation from Pakistan. The 'Self Governance' of this area will again depend upon the true aspirations of its inhabitants conveyed through their genuine representatives.

On the Indian side one can begin with Ladakh. This area has in the real sense lacked 'Good Governance' as well as 'Self Governance' for a long time. It is only during the last decade or so that the people have got some semblance of local governance. What Delhi had been doing in Kashmir, Kashmiris had been doing to Ladakh, that is ruling it as a colony. Only about 30 years back this area was considered a God forsaken place. Any Kashmiri posted here would consider himself in exile and the Government would also construe it as a punishment posting.

It was only with the opening of Ladakh for Tourism in 1974 and starting of civilian flights that its capital Leh developed into a modern town. At the moment it is the most modern and advanced town of its size in the entire sub-continent. The setting up of the Ladakh Autonomous Hill

Development Council gave them a little bit of self governance. However, they still continue to depend upon the state government, which they consider to be Kashmir centric. They continue to clamour for direct rule from Delhi.

Then there is a cleavage between the Shia majority Kargil district and Buddhist dominated Leh district. Kargil Shias would prefer association with Baltistan rather than with Leh. At the moment they prefer the Sunni valley to Buddhist Leh. The 'Self Governance' of entire Ladakh Region seems quite complicated because of divided loyalties. Any proposed set up will have to cater to this problem.

Jammu has more or less had good as well as Self Governance. They have been the rulers of the state for over a hundred years. It is only after 1947 that they have been seeing a mixed government. During this period they have been harbouring a grudge that the Kashmiris from the valley are ruling over them. They have been claiming that the valley politicians and officers have been discriminating against them in various developmental plans.

On the contrary, Jammu has taken a tremendous leap forward during the last 17 years of upheaval and turmoil in the valley. However, one of the main reasons for this unfounded complex of discrimination is the inclination of the Hindu majority of the area towards India. The local people have always been clamouring for stronger integration with the rest of the country at the cost of alienating valley dwellers more and more from India.

The 1953 episode was the result of a similar campaign. It is in fact the valley with its Muslim majority periphery which has all along lacked both 'Good Governance' as well as 'Self Governance'. Except for two periods, 1947 to 1953 (Sheikh Abdullah's first tenure) and 1964 to 1971 (G.M.Sadiq's tenure), there was only mis-Governance for most of the time. The main reason for this has been the absence of genuine peoples' representative lead-

ership. Kashmir has had, most of the time, imposed or installed rulers whose strings were pulled from Delhi. There has been absolutely no accountability, which has allowed corruption to eat away at the vitals of the society.

The whole administrative set up has been rated as the second most corrupt in all of India. A massive establishment of over three hundred thousand employees has been created which takes away the major portion of the state budget as its salary. The system would run more efficiently if they are reduced to a third of their present strength. For political reasons Delhi has created a huge and colossal army of 'slaves'. This colonial approach combined with total lack of accountability has completely shattered the basic infrastructure, be it health services, roads, power and so on. The most compelling need of the valley is to somehow get 'Good Governance' by honest and upright people so as to first get the whole administrative set up in order and make it truly people friendly and accountable.

This can only be achieved if honest and genuine leadership is allowed to come up and they have a free hand to completely overhaul the entire administrative machinery. How this can be done is the million dollar question! Thus devolving 'Self Governance' to Kashmir will not be as easy as it may seem especially with the present colonial set up still in place on both sides.

Let us hope the present political leadership in the sub-continent, which appears to be genuinely interested in settling this difficult problem for the benefit of the suffering masses and in the interests of world peace, has the will and strength to take some momentous and historical decisions to reach this goal!

The last point in the 'Out of Box' solution pertains to 'Joint Management' of the 'Identified', 'Demilitarized', and 'Self Governing' Kashmir. The first three points defining the measures to be taken for the solution of the vexed

problem appear people centric. These show that the main concern is for the suffering people of Kashmir. All three steps could constitute a possible way forward for their emancipation and release from untold miseries and sufferings. However, the point regarding 'Joint Management' does not seem to gel with other proposed measures. Yes, if it was only question of real estate and dividing of some disputed land among two antagonists with serious differences about its ownership, one could suggest a 'Joint Management' or what Indians prefer to call, the 'Joint Supervision' of the disputed land. Had Kashmiris been dumb driven cattle, (unfortunately we have been treated like that for past few Centuries!), one would say they could be jointly managed by two owners.

But the question is not only of the beautiful and enchanting piece of land but of over 10 million 'living' people with hopes and aspirations. The words 'Joint Management' sound more like 'Joint Slavery' when uttered in reference to living people. It seems as if two neighbouring shepherds have failed to control a group of unruly and unmanageable sheep individually and in their mutual interest, they decide to manage and control them jointly. Such attitude is further confirmed by both the countries ruling out total independence for Kashmir.

It is most tragic and unfortunate that such thoughts are emanating from the people who had to struggle hard for their own freedom and emancipation from a couple of centuries of enslavement by the world's greatest colonizers, the British. One would have expected much higher values and respect for the freedom of others from these 'liberated' and 'emancipated' people but unfortunately they seem to have imbibed the colonialist and imperialist philosophy of their erstwhile masters.

It is sad that instead of emulating the values of Tagore and Iqbal, they are following Bush and Blair. One is tempted

here to quote the famous lines from Tagore's *Geetanjali*. "Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high; Where knowledge is free; Where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls; Where words come out from the depths of truth; Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection; Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way into the dreary desert sand of dead habit; Where the mind is led forward by thee into ever widening thought and action into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake".

One wonders where that country is and where is that freedom? What would Tagore have thought about our present situation had he been alive? Similarly, would Iqbal have been shocked to see how Kashmiris are being treated in this age of enlightenment? However, the most pathetic and tragic part is the absence of any true Kashmiri leadership forcefully putting forth our view point. Due to our misfortune, we failed to have a neutral voice of our own in the most crucial and decisive time concerning the fate of our Nation in 1947. Our own leaders, who had promised to get us a place of honour and dignity, landed us in the worst episode in our long and tragic history. Even now we still lack that independent neutral voice of ours which could plead the case of 'Kashmir First'. We have either pro-India or pro-Pak or even pro-America or pro-European Union outfits but no real pro-Kashmiri set ups. Isn't there someone truly and genuinely patriotic and nationalistic to speak for the Kashmiris without the high flown rhetoric about solving all the problems of the sub-continent and the world?

Apart from these basic emotional and sentimental issues, the 'Joint Management' would entail numerous technical and administrative problems. How does one manage a territory so large and inhabited by such a wide variety

of people with different religions, cultures, languages, and history? The most ideal approach would be to explore the possibility of implementing the first three measures of the proposal to allow emergence of a practical and workable final solution by consensus and then extend a 'JOINT GUARANTEE' for its sustenance. Both countries should agree to a 'JOINT GUARANTEE' for the rights of the people of the State rather than their 'Joint Management' or 'Joint Supervision'. Whatever final solution comes about, it can only be sustained if guaranteed by the two traditional claimants of this beautiful but unfortunate land. In fact, to be really sustainable, it may also have to be guaranteed by the Chinese as they not only have a long border with J & K but a good chunk of the State is with them.

The solution itself has innumerable options and according to some reports, there are about forty variations in circulation. Among these there are three most talked about possible options. First would be a simple and straight division of the State taking Chenab watershed as the dividing line. Towards the East, the Buddhist portion of Ladakh (Leh district and Zaskar) would go to India. However, this would virtually mean division of the State on religious and ethnic lines depending upon the affinity and proximity of the people to either dominion. But such a concept is opposed tooth and nail by India claiming it to be confirmation of 'Two Nation Theory', which they refuse to accept even after accepting the partition of the country on the same basis! According to some this may technically be the only long lasting solution. There are many minor variants of the option.

The second option proposed by many is the merging of part of Jammu province, and Ladakh in India; merging of Northern Areas and 'Azad' Kashmir except Muzaffarebad district into Pakistan and declaring the 'Greater Kashmir' (Valley with peripheral districts of Kargil, Muzaffarebad,

Poonch, Rajouri, part of Udhampur, and Doda) as an independent country guaranteed jointly by India, Pakistan, and China.

The third option proposed by some other people is an Independent State of Jammu & Kashmir with a federal structure, again guaranteed by its neighbours. It has also been given the name of 'United States of Kashmir' and seems to be inspired by Americans. There are two aspects to the problem. One is the dispute resultant from the partition of the sub-continent and the other is the problem peculiar to each of the five regions existing even before the partition. Both the aspects need to be kept in view while proposing possible solutions.

However, the first and foremost thing is to create an atmosphere to debate and discuss all these possible options. This would involve breaking of all physical and mental barriers. The four point formula is not a solution in itself but a practical and a workable approach to the ultimate solution. There is a strong feeling that one can repeat the fall of the Berlin Wall in the sub-continent. This single incident created the European Union, virtually a single country now. Why can't we do a similar thing in our part of the world? An independent and fully autonomous State of Jammu & Kashmir, with its sovereignty guaranteed by its immediate neighbours, could do the same for South Asia. This could pave the way for emergence of a South Asian Economic Union with Kashmir as a bridge between its members. Kashmir, which is called the Switzerland of Asia due to its physical appearance, could be same politically also. This proposition with all other options can be considered only after the implementation of the first three points of the 'Out of Box' solution, which would address and remove the harshest conditions presently faced by the people of the State.

Making borders irrelevant by allowing free trade

and travel between different parts of the erstwhile State of Jammu & Kashmir, with restoration of all ancient links within the sub-continent and outside (Central Asia and Tibet), could create a positive atmosphere for the ultimate settlement. In fact such a set up could be a precursor to a real SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation). The four point formula, if taken as an approach and not as a solution in itself within the parameters suggested above, could possibly be the only way out of the tragedy of Kashmir and may end the half century long suffering and misery of its people. If we fail to grasp the opportunity now, the history will never forgive us and Kashmir will continue to bleed perennially.

14.

THE ACCESSION DOCUMENT-DOES IT EXIST?

There have always been some ugly events and scenes involving Kashmir's emerging young leadership. There is a clash between the veterans who have seen the events of 1947 first hand and those who were born much later. The events of 1947 when the erstwhile princely State of Jammu & Kashmir is supposed to have acceded to the Union of India, according to some foreign authors, seem to be shrouded in confusion and mystery. In fact, the entire sub-continent at that time was in total turmoil. There were communal riots all over the sub-continent. There were hordes of refugees going from one dominion to the other and some of these were getting butchered en route. The Jammu & Kashmir State escaped from this carnage except for Jammu where more than three hundred thousand Muslims were massacred in cold blood. Even though the Kashmir Valley remained safe from these riots and Mahatma Gandhi saw a ray of light there, yet it had a different kind of upheaval.

The tribesmen from the North West Frontier Province invaded Kashmir supposedly to assist the Muslim uprising against the Maharaja. This was started in Poonch and spear-headed by Sardar Ibrahim. In the valley itself, the National Conference, which was leading a struggle against the feu-

dal Maharaja, had started the 'Quit Kashmir Movement' in 1946. Sheikh Abdullah, who had spearheaded the movement, was in Jail. In terms of the Partition Act, the British had given a choice to over 500 princely states to join either of the two dominions. There were three states which had Muslim/Hindu rulers but the majority of population in these states were not the followers of the religion of the rulers. The Muslim rulers of two states, Hyderabad and Junagarh, opted for accession to Pakistan but India took over the states through military action, as the majority of the population wanted to join the Indian Union. In the case of Kashmir where the majority of the population was Muslim, there was certainty that due to its proximity to Pakistan, the state would join Pakistan. The Maharaja, a Hindu, was hesitant to make an immediate choice. A large chunk of his population was in revolt against him.

This prompted military action from both the dominions, which made a mess of the whole situation. Kashmiris, due to their misfortune, got embroiled in a bloody conflict not of their own making. In this confused and uncertain situation the State is supposed to have acceded to the Union of India. Alastair Lamb, in his book *'Kashmir, a Disputed Legacy 1846-1990'* says, "At the very heart of the matter is the decision made by the Maharaja of Jammu & Kashmir in October 1947 to accede to India. From this all else has flowed; and its consequences are with us still."

The entire Indian claim of Kashmir being an integral part of the Union of India is based on a document known as the *'Instrument of Accession'* signed between the ruler of the erstwhile princely State of Jammu & Kashmir, Maharaja Hari Singh, and Lord Mountbatten, the Governor General of India. Doubts have been raised about the very existence of such a document and some people including Alastair Lamb question whether the Maharaja actually signed it. According to him in spite of the best efforts he

was not able to see the original document anywhere. He even approached the National Archives in Delhi where the original copy is supposed to be preserved but was denied access to the original document. He could only get unsigned typed copies.

The *'Instrument of Accession'* is said to have been got signed from the Maharaja by VPS Menon.

Alastair Lamb considers it humanly impossible for VPS Menon to have shuttled between Delhi, Jammu, and Srinagar in a single day to obtain the signature of the Maharaja and then hand over the document to Lord Mountbatten. The accession document is supposed to have been signed on October 26 and the Indian Forces started landing at Srinagar Airport on October 27. Alastair Lamb mentions in his book that the first troops to reach Kashmir came much before the signing of the *Instrument of Accession* and were Patiala Sikhs sent by the Maharaja of Patiala to help Maharaja Hari Singh. This battalion of Sikh troops reached Srinagar on October 17 in a convoy of civilian trucks carrying supplies and went straight to Srinagar Airport to secure it for the already planned air lift of Indian Forces which was to follow soon. In fact, Maharaja of Patiala himself came to Jammu on October 27 to personally supervise the operations by his troops.

According to Josef Korbel the airlifting of troops to Kashmir had been a well planned operation. Such operations need extensive preparations and drill. It could not have been undertaken on the spur of the moment within one day of the signing of the *Accession*. Both the authors feel that the Indian leaders had already made up their mind to integrate the erstwhile princely State of Jammu & Kashmir into the Union of India. The Maharaja had been of two minds about the accession of his State to either dominion. Probably he would have preferred to remain independent. It was with this thought in his mind that he had offered a 'Stand

Still Agreement' to the Governments of both India and Pakistan.

The Government of Pakistan had immediately accepted the request and signed a 'stand still agreement'. However, the Government of India had sought some more time to consider it and eventually did not sign it at all. One of the reasons for the vacillation of the Maharaja was the advice rendered to him by his Prime Minister Ram Chand Kak, who also desired an independent Kashmir. The Maharaja's hand was forced by the invasion of tribesmen of the North West Frontier Province. Had these tribesmen not come plundering everything in their path, the Maharaja might have resisted the pressure to sign the instrument of accession and may have opted for an Independent State of Kashmir. On advice from Delhi the Maharaja sacked Kak and appointed Mehar Chand Mahajan as his new Prime Minister. Mahajan did all the running around to facilitate the dispatch of Indian troops to Kashmir.

Korbel has also questioned the insistence of Lord Mountbatten for the signing of the accession in unusual circumstances as a prior condition for assistance. Immediately after the tribal invasion, the Maharaja had sent an urgent request to Government of India for assistance to save his State. However, Lord Mountbatten had expressed inability to assist him unless he acceded to India. Why was it necessary for the Maharaja to accede to India first in such an emergency before getting any assistance? Why could he not be assisted first and then the accession could be concluded in a more peaceful and settled atmosphere?

There are two other interesting aspects related to the accession. The Maharaja, who is supposed to have signed the accession of his State to the Union of India, immediately left the State after doing this and never came back. He passed rest of his life in exile in Mumbai where he ultimately died. As mentioned earlier, just prior to the accession Sheikh

Mohammad Abdullah, there had started an open revolt against the Maharaja in 1946 under the banner of the famous 'Quit Kashmir Movement'. He had been tried and sentenced for treason because of this and was in Jail. The Indian leadership was instrumental in getting him released and appointed as the Head of the Maharaja's Emergency Administration, to get his support for the accession. The accession was temporary and had to be confirmed by the free will of the people to be exercised through a referendum held under international auspices.

Such an exercise has not yet taken place as both countries accuse each other of not fulfilling the basic requirement of demilitarisation of the entire State as stipulated in the UN Resolutions on the subject.

Some of our leaders were intentionally or unintentionally a party to the unfortunate and tragic events of 1947. The circumstances of the accession are reminiscent of the earlier loss of sovereignty of independent Kashmir during the Mughal period. Even at that time, Delhi, which was the seat of the Mughal Empire, had annexed Kashmir through treachery and betrayal. It is a very tragic repetition of history.

During the sixteenth century it was only one empire which was trying to annexe us. In 1947, there were two conflicting ideologies trying to merge us within their dominions. It was our misfortune that the tallest leader we had could not plead our case without being swayed by either dominion. Had he kept himself neutral and projected the voice of Kashmiris as a third party to the dispute, we may have gained our freedom long back! Even now we do not have a totally independent and forceful neutral voice but are again swayed by one or the other party.

The generation of Kashmiris which was a witness to the events of 1947 is slowly passing away. Ultimately it will be the books of history which will be left as a reference for future generations. Unless something is done now, we will

have similar tragic upheavals with each new generation.

There is only one way of getting rid of this baggage of history and a sense of guilt of 1947. Things must be sorted out and clearly understood before this generation passes into history.

15.

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL SIEGE

There is a popular folk tale about the confinement of a Prince from the outside world to save his life. It is said that once upon a time there was a King who did not have any issue. He went to an astrologer who told him that he will soon be blessed with a son but there is a curse on him. He has not to be exposed to the outside world till the age of twelve. Should he get exposed to the outside world, he will surely die! The King was soon blessed with a son. To safeguard him from the curse, he built a palace secluded from the outside world and provided everything inside it. Whatever the boy needed was made available to him within the confines of the palace. He had everything, the toys, the books, a play area, and in fact whatever he desired was there. As he grew up, he had no notion about the existence of the outside world. He was contented and satisfied as he had not been exposed to things outside the palace confines. For him the whole world was limited to whatever was inside the palace. One day when he was having his food, he found a bone in the dish being served to him. In anger he threw it at the waiter who ducked and the bone hit a glass pane and broke it. The boy rushed to the window and glanced on the outside world. From that very instant he be-

came totally restless and discontented. He wanted to go out to see the world.

Both the Indian and the Pakistan Governments seem to have heard the famous folk tale and are, therefore, keeping the people of the valley confined in the way of the Prince. It is a challenging job for a Kashmiri to move out freely to the outside world. He faces both the physical as well as a psychological siege. Ladakhis are completely cut off from surface travel for more than six months even though there are physical links via Tibet (through Demchok), and Northern Areas of Pakistan (through Kargil-Skardu), which remain open throughout the year. They have been completely cut off from their centuries old spiritual link to Lhasa which had been the traditional seat of Dalai Lama. Neither the Chinese nor the Pakistanis are prepared to open these routes because of some political reservations.

For a Kashmiri from the valley getting a passport in Srinagar is a tall order. In some cases the passport applications have been pending for years. The antecedents of the applicants have to be verified from almost a dozen intelligence and police agencies. The Regional Passport Offices in Srinagar or Jammu forward the particulars of the applicant to the Criminal Investigation Department Headquarters. From here these go to Special Branch, Counter Intelligence, and to District Police for verification. Each agency takes its own time in getting the particulars verified. All the reports are sent back to CID Headquarters who convey no objection to the Passport Officer for issue of the passport. The clearance is also taken from the Central Intelligence Bureau and the Research and Analysis Wing in certain cases.

A similar procedure is followed for Kashmiris who are already abroad. All Indian Missions abroad have to obtain clearance from the State or the Central Home Ministry before issuing a new passport or renewing an existing passport in case of all Kashmiris residing and working there.

Sometimes this creates an embarrassing situation as the working permits of these people become invalid unless the passports are renewed. To avoid these situations the passports are sometimes renewed on year to year basis. For the Muslims of the Valley apart from difficulty in getting travel documents, there is also a continuous fear of harassment by security agencies in different parts of India.

They are all suspected of being potential terrorists. It is reported that there are over three hundred thousand educated unemployed youth in Kashmir. Government is not in a position to provide jobs to all. These very youth could easily get jobs in the Middle East, South East Asia (Malaysia and Brunei), and many other places. Even some countries in the Middle East including Saudi Arabia have issued official instructions for giving preference to Kashmiri Youth in employment. It is a pity that the Government, instead of allowing these youth to go abroad to earn some valuable foreign exchange, is making their travel almost impossible. It may be easier for the youth to cross the Line of Control and return with AK 47 rifles than to go abroad through normal channels to find a job!

Even if a Kashmiri gets a passport after Herculean efforts, he is not able to get a Pakistani visa unless he has some blood relations there. The Srinagar-Muzzaffarebad bus has remained a symbolic gesture only because of the elaborate and complicated clearance procedure and limited operations. More than a year's operation has enabled only few hundred people to make use of this facility. Had this route been opened fully without any draconian restrictions, Islamabad would be only a five hour drive from Srinagar and people would be able to go there throughout the year without any difficulty.

For last 60 years, Kashmiris have been made to think only about links to Delhi or Islamabad. The most important historical links to Central Asia have been completely re-

moved from the memory of the people: Had we been able to continue our cultural, social, and commercial links to Samargand, Yargand, and other Central Asian capitals, we may not have become so hyper-sensitive to links in the sub-continent. Even in the sub-continent we were primarily allowed only one link up, to Delhi which we had to invariably cross for all journeys whether within the sub-continent or abroad.

This involuntary arrangement of getting confined to a closed space automatically makes one claustrophobic. One develops a siege mentality which has an adverse effect on one's psyche. The artificial barriers are also responsible for creating tension and stress in the minds of the population. It is expected that the Srinagar Airport will start functioning as an International Airport from the middle of the next year. Because of the disputed nature of Kashmir many foreign airlines may not be in a position to start flights to this area.

However, Indian Airlines and Air India and others should be able to begin direct flights to the Middle East, South East Asia, and Central Asia. They could easily start operations to Dubai (UAE), Jeddah (Saudi Arabia), Singapore, Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia), Dushanbe (Tajikistan), Tashkent (Uzbekistan), and Almaty (Kazakhstan). Most of these places are already on the air route map of these airlines and the flying times would be from an hour and a half to about five hours.

If direct travel for tourism and trade from Srinagar to the destinations mentioned picks up, there will be an automatic opening up of the decades old psychological siege. People will realise that there are other places than Delhi and Islamabad! Similarly the opening of land routes across Demchok and Kargil-Skardu will be a historical event for the Ladakhis.

There is a universal trend to open up traditionally closed areas and one day the whole world is going to be like the European Union: a land without borders! The greatest gift of a real CBM (Confidence Building Measure) which the leaders of the sub-continent can give to Kashmiris is the real opening up of the borders and not symbolic gestures for diplomatic and political consumption. Will they rise up to the occasion and seize this historical opportunity? Will they open up all routes to allow people to freely see the outside world? Or will they keep Kashmiris confined like the Prince of the traditional folk tale? The final solution of the 'Kashmir Problem' may depend on that very decision!

16.

KASHMIR, AN OVERSIZED CANTONMENT

During the peak tourist season one could see at the start of the main bazaar in the tourist resort of Sonamarg an overhead hoarding on the main highway which read, 'INDIAN ARMY WELCOMES YOU TO SONAMARG'. In a way it sums up the whole situation in Kashmir. It is the Security Forces and not the Tourism Department which is welcoming tourists. It gives a strange feeling of the whole valley or for that matter the whole State being an oversized cantonment. The actual ground situation clearly bears this out. As soon as one enters the State through the gateway of Lakhanpur, the Security Forces camps start on both sides of the highway. Main concentrations start from Samba onwards. Nearing Jammu it increases substantially and from Tawi crossing the entire river bank up to the bridge is lined with the Security Forces.

After leaving the city, the same scene starts from Nagrota and culminates into a massive presence in Udhampur, which is virtually a Security Forces City. From here onwards every township on the highway has Security Forces and paramilitary camps though with a smaller strength. After crossing the tunnel, the concentration increases from Qazigund onwards and the biggest ever presence is at the

entrance to the city of Srinagar in the Badamibagh Cantonment which is virtually a city in itself. It is complete in every respect with residential areas, schools, hospitals, shopping areas, and recreational places. Apart from the main cantonment there are other smaller ones and also the headquarters of RR (Rashtriya Rifles, the counter insurgency force) in different districts.

In the city itself there is huge presence in different parts of both Security Forces and paramilitary forces. Apart from this there are smaller detachments of paramilitary forces guarded by bunkers and surrounded by barbed wire in almost all civilian localities of both old and new city housed in migrant houses, guest houses, and hotels. Every major road crossing has pill boxes with machine guns. After leaving the city and proceeding towards Uri, one observes that the entire highway and all the towns en route have Security Forces and Paramilitary establishments. A similar situation exists in all tourist resorts and other district headquarters. In proportion to the local population, it must be the largest concentration of security forces anywhere in the world. The Srinagar Airport, which is the first entry of an outsider to the valley, is in fact a military air base. Only a small portion of the airfield is used by the civilians.

As the planes come in to land, the only thing visible is row upon row of military aircraft and anti aircraft guns and missiles. One has the eerie feeling of landing in a war zone. The entry and exit from the airport remind one about high security prisons with high steel gates, rolls upon rolls of barbed wire, security pill boxes and bunkers with machine guns.

Now take the major highways and roads leading to some resorts and other important places.

These are all guarded by security forces (ROP, road opening parties) on a daily basis. Soldiers are deployed

after every hundred metres or so, on all such roads. It involves deployment of thousands of troops everyday. Apart from this one can observe foot patrols of army and paramilitary forces everywhere, in towns, villages and almost every locality of the city. Another common sight are armoured vehicles moving continuously on all important roads, streets and sometimes even inside narrow lanes. The most awesome are the jumbo size anti-mine vehicles of the Security Forces. These are really frightening and one tries one's best to keep away from these.

The status of official buildings and even public offices is well known. These look more like high security establishments than public facilities. In some of the Civil Lines areas where top functionaries of the Government reside almost all buildings are very well protected. These do not look like private residences of city dwellers but resemble mini forts. Added to this Security Forces and paramilitary presence are the local police with their hundreds of security vehicles. According to an estimate there are more than 5,000 security vehicles in Kashmir alone. The strength of local police exceeds a hundred thousand men. In normal circumstances, the security forces are governed by their own laws within their own establishments and are subject to all civilian laws outside their own barracks. However, the two draconian legislations, 'Armed Forces Special Powers Act' and the 'Disturbed Areas Act' have delegated to security forces such vast and unquestionable powers that the entire valley and its peripheral areas resemble a totalitarian police state.

The writ of the security forces runs in every sphere of day to day life. They get preference over every thing due to 'Security Reasons' and for safeguarding the 'National Interest'. Their actions are above local laws. They can violate all traffic restrictions and regulations and no one has the courage to challenge or stop them. Slowly they are out-

numbering the locals in many places. Kashmiris are now used to their overwhelming presence and do not even notice it. However, for outsiders especially from Europe and America, such a large presence of gun totting uniformed soldiers makes them somewhat uncomfortable. They feel that they have landed in a war zone!

There is always a debate about the actual number of troops in Kashmir. Some even put the number at a million troops of all kind. The concentration of such a large force creates tension and stress both among the local population as well as among the security forces themselves. During last decade and a half the stress related illness among the civilian population has gone up over a hundred times. Compared to few thousand cases before the turmoil, now it is reported that the number of patients with psychosomatic disorders and other stress related problems is a few hundred thousand. Among the forces themselves there have been numerous cases of suicide and fratricide. On an average 30 to 40 cases every year. This year the number has gone up to 140.

The prominent human rights activist Gautam Nawlakha in a recent seminar on human rights held in Srinagar said that the Government of India every now and then claims that the number of militants has come down drastically over the years, but still the concentration of the security forces personnel is the same. He added that the same shows that they are here to control the population that has become rebellious since they are demanding their right to self determination. There is a general feeling that this large force is not to keep militants at bay but to prevent a mass upsurge resembling the open revolt of 1990 when millions crowded the roads demanding 'Azadi'.

It is because of this that all civilian areas have been put under a cordon of bunkers and pill boxes. No civilian gatherings for any reason whatsoever are allowed any where in

the valley. However, it is impossible to crush the spirit of the people by such means on a permanent basis. The resentment and anger simmers within and can explode any time. If that happens, even a million strong force will fail to contain the mass upsurge! There is only one way to prevent that. The forces should be sent back to the barracks as soon as possible. The sooner the better!

17.

THE 'UNACHIEVABLE' PART

Dr. Allama Iqbal once said "An Eagle never falls due to fatigue of flying. If you have the will, then there is no danger of fall!" It seems our young leaders have probably missed this famous couplet by the revolutionary poet of the sub-continent, who always upheld the freedom and dignity of a human being. There have been a number of comments recently in the media about the changing stances of some of the leaders of Kashmiris 'Freedom Movement' These give an impression that some of the leaders are suffering from the fatigue of a long struggle and are looking for mid-way solutions.

On the other hand, the changing stances could also be due to lack of convictions and loss of faith in their own capability to achieve the high goals, which they have set before the people. Kashmiris greatest misfortune has been that our leaders have always aimed to enjoy the fruits of their struggle in their own lifetime. Although there is a lot of lip service for sacrificing our today for the tomorrow of future generations, yet ultimately we end up doing something for our own today! The concept of selfless service does not seem to exist in the psyche of our leaders. However, it does seem to exist in the poor and down trodden

masses that have undergone tremendous hardships and have sacrificed everything for the national cause.

These days most of our leaders seem to be fully engaged in preparing and projecting road maps, options, and 'achievable' solutions. While some are talking about the 'Achievable Nationhood', others are taking us back to previous times varying from Sheikh Abdullah's 1947 to Yousuf Shah Chak's 1586. Still others are carving out a Little America (USK) for us! The more options are put before the people, the more they get confused. An average person understands something which is simple and straight. It would be much more honest to guide people through a straight and simple path outlining the ultimate goal in the easy to understand language without verbosity and confusing alternatives.

According to news reports, one of the road maps issued recently 'seeks to carve out an economically independent sub-entity with a dash of sovereignty'. The document is supposed to have taken a multidisciplinary academic approach ranging from History, Psychology, Politics, International Law, Conflict Resolution, Diplomacy, and Economics. The resolution of the conflict is rooted in the circumstances of 1989 rather than in 1947 or earlier. If the problem has to be solved permanently, then one has to look beyond the known bench marks and delve deeper into the history. The troubled psyche of Kashmiris does not carry only the hurts it has got from 1989 onwards but some wounds are deeper pertaining to earlier episodes. A lot of effort has gone into producing the document in the romantic meadows of Gulmarg.

In any case, it is better to have a tangible document about a certain goal with a methodology to reach it instead of abstract slogans about 'Azadi' or a place of 'Honour and Dignity'. However, one does not set goals by achievable standards but by the justice and fairness of one's claim. If the projected goal is based on the genuineness of

one's basic and inalienable rights then it can be reached no matter how long and difficult the struggle.

India started its war of Independence which was termed by the British 'Mutiny', in 1857. It got freedom only after 100 years in 1947. It is only when a person is not sure about the righteousness of the basic goal that doubts creep in en route and the fatigue sets in. The foremost task should be to define the goal in the most precise and simple terms. It is not dependant on what can be achieved but on what must be achieved to satisfy the aspirations of the people.

Apart from this particular road map there are already some more documents in circulation or under preparation about 'Self Rule', and 'Autonomy'. In addition, there are also a number of other 'Vision Documents' and 'Out of Box' solutions being proposed and debated in several intellectual circles and think tanks. Each and every proposal or formula is based on compromise. It is given out that keeping in view the prevailing circumstances in the sub-continent various contenders have to shift from the stated rigid positions to achieve peace. There are no two opinions that the stated rigid positions have to be given up by the two contenders of the land but the main contender that is the people of Kashmir who are struggling for their basic rights do not have to give up their oft repeated stated position.

They should neither be expected nor forced to give up their struggle for the basic rights which have been acknowledged to them by the entire world. Any settlement or peace achieved by compromising basic rights can never be everlasting. As has happened in the past, every new generation challenges it and accuses their predecessors of a sell out. Unless we address the very basic issue and resolve the question of the basic rights of the people, we will continue to go in a vicious circle. People have been living on the hope of realising the ultimate goal, the hope held out by the very same leaders who are now pleading for stopping midway

at the immediate achievable goals.

Hundreds of thousands of people have sacrificed their lives for reaching the goal of total emancipation and freedom, redeeming the freedom and sovereignty lost centuries back. Even some had willed that the final victorious liberators should visit their graves and announce that the goal of freedom has been attained whenever it happens! The true freedom fighters do not trade in the blood of martyrs. If one is fatigued and tired, it is better for him to leave the movement at that point and let others move forward to attempt to reach the goal instead of compromising the entire effort.

One can debate the methodology, the path forward, giving up of violence which often corrupts the end, and following the route of dialogue, but one must not compromise on the ultimate goal. One does not need to go to war and indulge in violence to realise the goal. The most important thing is to have an unflinching faith in one's beliefs and one's cause. Dr. Iqbal in another couplet says, "The slavery cannot be rid by stratagems and swords. If one has the strength of faith, the chains break up on their own".

Here one is reminded of a short story which we had in our school text books. A wolf coming down from the woods into the city in search of food. It meets a pet dog who relates to wolf the wonderful time it is having. It gets choicest food and a luxurious place to sleep inside the house. It asks the wolf to join him and enjoy all these luxuries. The wolf agrees but asks the pet dog to explain the circular mark round its neck. The dog says it is nothing but the mark of a collar which the owner puts round its neck. The wolf rushes back to woods saying that it would prefer to starve in the freedom of the woods than have a collar round its neck.

Thus one feels that the 'Unachievable' part in most of the 'Vision Documents' and 'Road Maps' is the permanent removal of the collar in the wolf and dog story!

Unless it is removed, the Kashmir tragedy will continue perennially.

18.

THE ONLY OPTION

The most debated question in the world at present is this highly intractable and knotty problem. A number of bloody wars have been fought between two neighbouring countries. The unending conflict has claimed the lives of hundreds of thousands of Kashmiris. It has been observed that every time a solution seems round the corner something untoward happens and we are back to square one. No one can explain the mystery which prevents solution of this problem. Is it the misfortune of the poor Kashmiris? Are they destined to suffer till the end of time?

No doubt there are political, geographical, and strategic considerations of the various parties to the conflict, yet the most compelling reasons for the prolongation of this dispute escape most of the analysts. A thorough study of our history and a psychological analysis of the people reveal that the problem is within us. It is our enigmatic attitude which is responsible for prolonging of our miseries and sufferings. We are not able to decide our options!

Firstly we seem to be confused about what we are looking for. We would like a place of honour and dignity as promised by our leaders of all hues and shades. But what does

honour and dignity mean for an ordinary Kashmiri? As Walter Lawrence stated in his *'Valley of Kashmir'*, "A man who can be beaten and robbed by any one with a vestige of authority soon ceases to respect himself and his fellow-men, and it is useless to look for the virtues of a free people among the Kashmiris, and unfair to twit them with absence of such virtues. The Kashmiri is what his rulers have made him, but I believe and hope that two generations of a just and strong rule will transform him into a useful, intelligent, and fairly honest man".

Unfortunately, to date we have not got those two generations of free rule! Kashmir has been smarting continuously for the last four centuries under an unshakeable yoke of slavery. Only the names and the ferocity of his masters have changed. The greatest misfortune of a Kashmiri is the failure of outsiders to fully understand him. In fact, no one is really able to know what is in his heart. It has been said that a kind word and a joke can reveal the best inside a Kashmiri. In the heart of his hearts a Kashmiri cherishes the goal of total and complete emancipation which he very fondly and lovingly calls, 'AZADI'.

However, he is also intelligent enough to know that the quagmire, in which he is stuck through no fault of his own, makes it virtually impossible to achieve that goal. But he is in no case prepared to give it up altogether and keeps on hoping that someday he will attain it.

He has been living on this hope for centuries and will continue to do that. Off and on there comes an opportunity to break these shackles. He makes all out efforts to break loose but gets pulled down again and again by the lack of character of his own fellow countrymen. He puts everything at risk to achieve 'AZADI' but his own kith and kin, claiming to lead him to this cherished goal, stab him in the back and force him to again lie low. He does so but only for a while or till he gets the next opportunity to rise.

He knows that his opponent is a massive and powerful country and he is too weak to take it head on. The only option to him is to cheat his opponent. Outwardly he praises the opponent but inside he hates him and seethes with anger and bides his time. It is a typical guerrilla approach. If you can't beat them, join them! Sometimes he feels down and out. Totally depressed and disappointed he is ready to compromise and resigns himself to his fate. This gives the impression that he is satisfied with his status quo. But then all of a sudden he wakes up and is ready for another bout.

This enigmatic attitude stemming from an extraordinarily long spell of slavery has prevented the formation of national character and pride in a Kashmiri. Truth has been the first casualty. This is especially true of our leadership right from the start of the first movement for freedom in 1931. Leaders have never remained on one single stand and have been changing stances as per their convenience. This typical behaviour has been exploited by outsiders to their advantage. They have pampered all the weaknesses in the character of a Kashmiri. It is the typical philosophy of survival of the weak against the tyranny of a strong and ruthless outsider. Because of this attitude, the outsider is totally confused about the real intentions of a Kashmiri. India knew that the majority of Kashmiris were against it in 1947 and that they would blindly follow their charismatic leader thinking he will guide them to the correct path. So they latched on to this leader. However, when he realised his mistake and turned against India, a massive campaign of character assassination was unleashed on Kashmiris. Since that time India has patronised and supported only the worst members of Kashmir society whom it could purchase with lure of money and power.

The most trusted have been only the non-Muslims. All Muslims irrespective of their views and status were suspect

even if they sided with them. On the other hand Pakistan encouraged and patronised only those who would toe their line. Unfortunately, this very behaviour has additionally been totally compounded by these outsiders during last 17 years. The situation became very ugly once militancy started in Kashmir. The youth took up arms only when they were totally frustrated by the so called democratic political process in 1987. They had opted for elections but were beaten and tortured and thrown into prison. In a way the arms were raised in self-defence.

It was an idealistic struggle emulating similar armed resistance movements for National liberation which had taken place all over the world. The first upsurge was truly nationalist for total independence of Kashmir. However, Pakistan hijacked the same by introducing their own brand of fighters committed to merging Kashmir with their country.

This made nationalists get totally marginalised. Indians reacted by eliminating both groups in a phased manner. They made use of the Pakistan's attempt to give a religious colour to the movement and projected it as an extremist, fanatic, terrorist movement of religious extremists. The word 'Cross Border Terrorism' became the most commonly used phrase of their vocabulary. The foreign elements from both the sides totally brutalized the movement going beyond the beliefs of Kashmiris. Finally, after having taken them to the peak of an armed struggle, the Pakistanis dumped them by the roadside.

On the other hand, instead of trying to wean away the people from the violent movement by real and true democratic means, the Indians adopted the policy of a diamond cutting a diamond. They turned around the people who were in the movement without any basic convictions and had joined it for extraneous considerations. These were called 'Friendlies' or 'Ikhwanis'. These were

utilised by the security forces as hit groups to terrorize people into submission. The militants who had started with the fiery and idealistic zeal of national liberation are not to be blamed. Any national liberation movement caught in the vortex of conflicting ideologies with rival parties having their own axes to grind is bound to get hijacked, criminalised, and brutalised.

Thus the real Kashmir problem is that the honest and genuine Kashmiris aspiring for their basic rights are caught in a bind, between the devil and the deep sea, they are being used as canon fodder by both the sides. They have absolutely no chance to get out of their enigmatic attitude and build their national character. This leaves them only one option, to ask both India and Pakistan to leave them alone to their fate. A new slogan of 'Quit Kashmir' is applied to both adversaries who have given them nothing but suffering and miseries for more than half a century!

Unless all Kashmiris sink their mutual differences, which are primarily because of ego and personality clash, and opt for one combined approach in unison for 'Kashmir First' or in other words, 'A Kashmir for Kashmiris.'

Regardless of so called geo-strategic and all other considerations, we have no escape from this bloody vortex we are doomed unless we build our national character, and for that to begin with, for a change, we have to speak the truth, the real truth in our hearts, and stand by it!

19.

PROMISED LAND, CURSED PEOPLE

Kashmir has been called a 'Paradise on Earth'. Almost all famous explorers and travellers who have visited Kashmir from ancient times praise in their accounts and travelogues the natural beauty of this land. The lofty mountains with snow clad peaks and glaciers. Dense and lush green forests dotted with enchanting meadows. Gushing mountain streams with water rushing down on boulders resembling fast flowing milk. High altitude mountain lakes with hanging glaciers sticking to cliffs surround these and ice floes floating within.

The mountain slopes and meadows with rows upon rows of all varieties of flowers and scented herbs. The dense forests with very tall pines unmatched in majesty and grandeur. Dozens of side valleys of savage beauty not seen anywhere in the world. The beauty of nature is truly overpowering and awe inspiring. It is beyond description and can only be experienced by being there! The description of the 'Promised Land' in the Bible aptly fits Kashmir. According to the Bible, Paradise-the place where humankind was created lay to the East. 'And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed.'

The Garden of Eden is stated to be situated between four rivers. Mesopotamia, where the Garden of Eden is usually supposed to exist, has only two rivers as the name of the region implies. The area around Kashmir has four rivers, Indus, Jhelum, Chenab, and Ravi. Thus Kashmir is truly a land between the rivers. The Bible mentions that the Lord showed Moses the 'Promised Land' but directed him not to enter it. 'Go thee unto Mount Nabo and die, but thou shalt not go unto the land which I give to the children of Israel'. 'The Lord said unto Moses, get thee on top of mount Pisgah and lift up thine eyes eastward, and Northward, Westward and southward and behold the 'Promised Land'. The land of milk and honey. The land which drinketh the water of heaven. The land is good and peaceable. The land where no galley with oars shall go!'

According to some legends Moses is buried near Athwattu in the land of Moab (Mowu) opposite Bandipore earlier known as Bethpor which is a derivative from the Beth-peor of the Bible. The view of the valley from top of a mountain locally called Nebo-bal is as per the description of the 'Promised Land'. Kashmir is locally known as Kashir and a Kashmiri is called a Kosher. Jews call Koshur something approvable and pure especially in regard to food. Many explorers and travellers from ancient times have written about the striking resemblance of Kashmir to Biblical lands.

It has also been mentioned in many accounts that in ancient times Kashmiris allowed only Jews to enter the valley. A Kashmiri shepherd wearing a robe (pheran) and a skull cap tending his sheep near a village is a typical scene from some biblical movie. If Kashmir is the 'Promised Land' are then Kashmiris God's 'Chosen People'? The Jews call themselves the 'Chosen People of God'. There are many theories about the origin of Kashmiris and some claim that they are the descendents of the lost tribes of Israel. A lot of research was done on the subject by British

anthropologists in mid-19th century who were travelling with British troops. That research concluded that many of the Kashmiri tribes were remnants of the Lost Tribes of Israel.

The main start to these theories about the Jewish origin of Kashmiris was given in the book of George Moore, 'Lost Tribes' printed in 1860. Subsequently a number of books have been written on the related subjects especially about the presence and burial of Jesus in Kashmir. These include, 'The Fifth Gospel' and 'In Search of Historical Jesus' by Professor Fida Hassnain; 'Jesus Died in India' by Faber-Kaiser; and 'Jesus Lived in India' by Holger Kersten. There are other sources such as the controversial book, 'Unknown Life of Christ' written by the Russian explorer Nicholas Notovitch about the Hemis Manuscript in 1889; 'Jesus in Heaven on Earth' by Khawaja Nazir Ahmed of Woking Muslim Mission, UK, and a number of references in 'Bhavishya Maha Purana' and Kalhana's *Raj Tarangni*. This is an interesting subject for research.

Among the Gujars in Kashmir there are some who claim to be descendants of Bani Israel. The tribes of Pakhtoons living in Gutlibagh near Ganderbal also claim to be descendants of Moses. There are striking similarities to the etymologies of Kashmiri place names and those found in the 'Torah' and the 'Book of Chronicles'. There are two important objects in Kashmir claimed to be of Jewish origin. The first is the 'Staff of Moses' which is claimed by some to be among the relics held at the shrine of Sufi Saint in Chrar Sharif and by some in the cave shrine at Aish Muqam. The other is the Ka Ka Pal stones in a temple at Bijbehara.

If we take Kashmiris to have a Jewish origin then one of the most important characteristic they have inherited is the God's curse on Bani Israel. Holy Quran describes in detail the doings of Bani Israel. Their greed, their impatience, their

betrayal of Prophets sent to them from time to time, their insolence, and their backsliding on the Covenants they had with

God is detailed in Sura Baqara. Moses conveys to them God's command to sacrifice a Heifer but they send him back asking for colour, type, and age etc. of the Heifer.

Finally they agree for the sacrifice but not with goodwill. God curses Bani Israel for their insolence and ordains that they will wander from place to place.

Kashmiris are facing a similar fate. The extent of suffering they have undergone in the last four centuries as well as their present condition makes one think that there is God's curse on them! They are totally enmeshed in a vicious circle of suffering without any chance of escape. In spite of this they do not mend their ways. Walter Lawrence in *'The Valley of Kashmir'* has described in detail the character and disposition of Kashmiris. "The Kashmiri bears an evil reputation in the Punjab, and indeed throughout Asia. Proverbs liken him to a snake in his morals, and to a fowl in his manners, and men are warned against admitting a Kashmiri to their friendship. Moorcroft, Hugel, Drew, and Barnes describe them as 'selfish, superstitious, ignorant, supple, intriguing, dishonest, false-tongued, ready with a lie, and given to various forms of deceit'. Moorcroft, however, admits that the vices of Kashmiris are not innate, but are due to the government under which they lived. These vices are the effects of his political condition rather than his nature."

Walter Lawrence concedes that in a country where there was practically no justice, the only weapon in the hands of the weak was lying or subterfuge. He states that two national features of their character are lying and envy or malice. A Kashmiri cannot see any one getting on in life. However, detailing the good qualities, Walter Lawrence writes, 'Kashmiris possess an individuality, and a na-

tional character which will cling to them wherever they go. Kashmiris are fond of their own country, its food, its water, and its dress. Finally, though the character of a Kashmiri leaves much to be desired, I think that it is to their credit that it is not worse, considering the few chances they have had for becoming truthful, manly, and self-respecting. A man who can be beaten and robbed by any one with a vestige of authority soon ceases to respect himself and his fellow-men, and it is useless to look for the virtues of a free people among the Kashmiris, and unfair to twit them with absence of such virtues. The Kashmiri is what his rulers have made him, but I believe and hope that two generations of a just and strong rule will transform him into a useful, intelligent, and fairly honest man".

Had Walter Lawrence been alive today, he would have been shocked to see the condition of Kashmiris who have had no chance to breathe and grow in the freedom he had envisaged for their transformation. They are stuck in a much worse condition! This is possible only because of some curse. Will this curse ever lift from us? Not until we mend our ways!

20.

RETURN OF THE 'NATIVES'

In the past sometimes there has been talk about the return of Pandits to Kashmir. This most ancient population of Kashmir valley had been displaced due the turmoil which erupted in 1990. The migration was in very tragic circumstances and these people were uprooted from their centuries old moorings for no fault of theirs. In a way they are the true and real unadulterated natives of Kashmir who had always maintained their age old traditions. They have also suffered two worst episodes in earlier times. The first was under the rule of Sikander, claimed to be the Idol Breaker (father of Zain-ul-Abidin, popularly known as Bud Shah), and second under the Afghan rule. It is alleged that during the reign of Sikander, they suffered extreme persecution, which was spearheaded by one of his ministers who was an ex- Brahmin and had converted to Islam. He is supposed to have been very vindictive and ruthless. This forced a large number of their community, especially the well to do ones, to migrate from Kashmir.

During the Afghan rule, Kashmiri Pandits faced the history's worst persecution. The Afghans with the introduction of the notorious 'Smoke Tax' or 'Zari Dood' took their persecution to extreme limits. The Afghan Governor had

confined all prominent Pandits in a house where cow dung was burnt to produce smoke to suffocate them! They could escape this fate only by agreeing to pay a tax which came to be known as 'Smoke Tax'. During the same period they were not allowed to cross the bridges walking upright but had to crawl across these. Many times Afghan officials would cross the mountain streams on the backs of Pandits. It is said that because of this inhuman practice they were made to wear a robe (Phiran) with two side pockets to enable the Afghan Official to keep his feet in these when riding a Pandit.

The migration during the time of Sikander was successfully reversed by the most illustrious king of Kashmir, Zain-ul-Abidin. He took very strong measures and enacted legislation to ensure their safety and rehabilitation. They enjoyed the best of facilities and amenities during his reign. However, the recent migration has been more traumatic and disastrous as it uprooted the entire community en masse.

Notwithstanding the claims of Holocaust and Genocide, the total number of casualties suffered during this migration did not exceed 200 or so. However, the physical and psychological impact of this upheaval has been cataclysmic especially for the older generation. In fact, more people collapsed from among the elder generation due to the harsh climatic and difficult living conditions in Jammu than were killed in Kashmir. The Kashmiri Pandits from the towns were able to manage to take shelter with some of their relatives already working in different parts of India. The worst sufferers were the villagers. They had to leave behind everything, their ancestral houses, lush green fields and the memories of good old days. Their life in refugee camps in Jammu was miserable. Many died due to heat to which they were not accustomed at all. Quite a few suffered snake and scorpion bites.

The inherent survival instinct of a Kashmiri helped

them and they were able to adapt themselves to changed situations and local environment. The elder generation was totally lost and confused and pined for their lost moorings. The new generation probably does not know what Kashmir is all about. In addition to Kashmiri Pandits, the other 'Natives' of Kashmir also had to leave for varied reasons. Many Muslim families left the valley from time to time due to threats of extortion and liquidation. However, they were able to keep their return channels open and did come back off and on, even though for very short duration. There have also been displacements of people from many areas in Jammu even though mostly on voluntary basis. There are a number of colonies of Muslims from Doda, Poonch, Rajouri, and Kashmir valley in the peripheral areas of Jammu city which have come up in last few years. There have also been many displacements to the other side of the Line of Control from the villages next to it which have been facing the brunt of militancy from both the sides.

The displaced persons going to other side did not get the same welcome and facilities which the Pandits have received all over India. By far the largest displacement including brutal massacres have only been witnessed by the Jammu people in 1947 immediately after the partition. Maharaja is supposed to have been tremendously upset by the open revolt of the Muslim soldiers in his army. He became vindictive and took sadistic pleasure in having his own Muslim subjects massacred ruthlessly. He would hear the stories about the doings of his marauding gangs every evening and would pat them for their actions. It is said that most of the killing was done by Sikhs who had entered the state from Punjab and by gangs of Dalits. The interior areas in Udhampur and Riasi suffered the most. The Muslims in these areas had no escape routes. It is alleged that a large number of Muslims in Riasi had converted to Hinduism but even then they were massacred!

From some of the areas in Jammu people had started migrating out of fear immediately after the declaration of partition. However, the ones left behind were taken out in convoys with the aim of crossing over to other side but were massacred en route. According to some elders who faced this trauma and survived, innocent Muslims were virtually butchered. This episode really deserves the title of 'Holocaust'.

At this very time a similar happening took place from the other side when a large number of refugees from Mirpur and other areas of Pakistan side of Kashmir descended on Jammu. They too had undergone some worst episodes and were uprooted from their ancestral homes. There are supposed to be a million refugees of that time who are still without any permanent resident status and rights in Jammu. In fact, the state Custodian General is still 'guarding' properties by maintaining a list of what are known as 'Evacuee Properties and Lands' pertaining to people who crossed over to other side.

Most of these houses and lands have been temporarily allotted by the government but the final ownership still vests in the persons who fled the state during the riots of 1947.

In addition, a large number of Kashmiris were sent to the Pakistan side of Kashmir under a policy called 'Push back' during the time of Sheikh Abdullah from 1947 to 1953 for being sympathetic to Pakistan. Some members of Mirwaiz family had migrated even earlier. In the case of Kashmiri Muslims there was an additional trauma. Many families got divided on the two sides of the border and quite a few passed away without seeing each other. However, Sheikh Abdullah before his death had introduced legislation called the 'Resettlement Act' to enable return of all Kashmiris who had left the state due to these upheavals.

Even though the legislation has become a law after a

controversial passage, yet it remains suspended under the orders of the Supreme Court. It has not so far helped in the return of the natives to their ancestral lands. Thus one needs to take an overall view of the whole situation of the displaced persons and work out a proper plan for the return of all natives of the former princely State of Jammu & Kashmir. The first and foremost requirement would be establishment of real peace. Unless the migrants or the displaced persons feel both physically as well as psychologically safe to return to their native places, they will not move. Constructing housing units in totally guarded pockets resembling concentration camps will not motivate any of these natives to return. This will in fact compound the problem by creating points of friction between different communities.

The return has to be absolutely normal to their original places of residence in the state with the active support of their former neighbours. This alone can restore the composite culture of Kashmir which has been in existence for centuries. To create a conducive atmosphere for such an eventuality the foremost requirement is to end the present persecution of the local population by security forces. Only when the existing population attains peace can they welcome the natives who have gone out from the valley and other places. The peace can come by a mutually agreed ceasefire between the security forces and the militants and simultaneous demilitarisation. The vicious circle of violence has to be broken somehow.

Thus the 'Return of the Natives' is not as simple as it may seem.

It is in itself an important part of the ultimate solution. The day the 'Natives' are able to return in peace with dignity and honour to their ancestral places of residence to an open embrace from their former neighbours ushering in the earlier era of centuries old brotherhood, the Kashmir problem would be deemed to have been solved!

21.

THE RIGHTS OF MAN

Thomas Paine wrote a classic about the Freedom of Man called '*The Rights of Man*'. It would be interesting to examine the Kashmir problem in the light of his sayings especially about various clauses, acts, and treaties. The entire problem of Kashmir is based on a single document, '*The Instrument of Accession*'. This was executed between the erstwhile Maharaja of Kashmir, Hari Singh, and Lord Mountbatten, the Governor General of India. Indians consider this document as the most important basis of relationship between the State of Jammu & Kashmir and the Union of India. A lot has been written about the authenticity of the document, the circumstances of its execution, and above all about its legal validity. Doubts have been cast about the very existence of the document.

Let us assume it was signed between the Maharaja and the Governor General. It may also be conceded that the Maharaja did it of his own free will and was not pressured, even though the circumstances of that time described by many suggest extreme compulsive pressure on the most reluctant ruler of the erstwhile princely State to do the needful. It has been alleged that the Indian leaders of that time including Pandit Nehru had made up

their mind to annex Kashmir at all costs even before the troubles started there. A simple glance on the Instrument of Accession displayed in original on the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India website reveals this distinctly.

The typed document displayed on the website has the month of signing originally mentioned as August at both places, next to the signature of Maharaja Hari Singh as well as that of Lord Mountbatten which has been corrected with a pen to October. It seems the document had been prepared in August itself when the question of accession had not even come up and in great haste the same document was taken by VPS Menon to obtain the signatures of the Maharaja at Jammu who corrected the date with his own hand. Similarly, Lord Mountbatten must have done the same thing while accepting the document. They did not probably think it necessary to re-type the document in October. Let us concede that the signing of the accession document took place as claimed.

However, the important point is about the circumstances prevailing in the State at that time. The majority of Maharaja's subjects both in Kashmir as well as in Jammu were in total revolt. The 'Quit Kashmir' movement was started in the valley by Sheikh Abdullah, while in Poonch the Maharaja's army itself had revolted. In physical terms the Maharaja had lost total control on his Princely State and he did not have the power to execute the deed of accession on his own. Even if we totally concede the events of '47 and take it that the State acceded to India, the actions of that time are not binding on the present generation. If the majority of the people feel that whatever was done in '47 was wrong and unjust, they have every right to disown it and take a different course.

If a minority talks in those terms it would be called insurgency or rebellion but if the majority has that view it is a revolution. Comments of Thomas Paine given in the Chap-

ter I of his classic reproduced below exactly as these appear are very relevant to the subject:

'There never did, there never will, and there never can, exist, a legislature, or any description of men, in any country, possessed of the right, or the power, of binding and controlling posterity to the END OF TIME: or, of commanding, FOR EVER, How the world shall be governed, or WHO shall govern it: and THEREFORE, all such clauses, acts, or declarations, by which the makers of them attempt to do what they have neither the right, nor the power to do, nor the power to execute, are in themselves NULL AND VOID. Every age, and generation must be as free to act for itself, in all cases, as the ages and generations that preceded it. The vanity and presumption of governing beyond the grave, is the most preposterous and insolent of all tyrannies. Man has no property in Man- neither has any generation property in the generations that are to follow. A legislature, or the people of any antecedent period, had no more right to dispose of the people of the present day, or to bind, or control them, in any shape whatsoever, than the legislature, or the people of the present day, have to dispose of, bind, or control, those who shall live a hundred, or a thousand years hence. Every generation is, and must be competent to all purposes which its occasions require. It is the living, and not the dead, that are to be accommodated. When man ceases to be, his power and wants cease with him; and having no longer any participations in the concerns of this world, he no longer has any authority, in directing who shall be its governors, or how its government shall be organised, or how administered. I contend for the right of the living, and against their being willed away, and controlled, and contracted for, by the manuscript authority of the dead. There was a time when kings disposed of their crowns by will, upon their death-beds, and consigned the people like the beasts of the field, to whatever successor they appointed. This is now so exploded, as scarcely to be re-

membered, and so monstrous, as hardly to be believed...

Although the laws which are made in one generation, often continue in force through succeeding generations, they continue to derive their force from the consent of the living, and are not repealed, not because they cannot be repealed, but because they are not, and the non repealing passes off for consent. A former legislature might as well have passed an act to have authorised themselves to live for ever, as to make their authority to live for ever. The circumstances of the world are continually changing, and the opinions of the men change also; and, as government is for the living, and not for the dead, it is the living that have any right in it. That which may be thought right, and be found convenient in one age, may be thought wrong, and found inconvenient in another. In such cases who is to decide-the living or the dead? It signifies nothing to man what is done to him after he is dead; but it signifies much to the living to have a will in what shall concern him.'

Thus it is evident from the above extract taken from Thomas Paine's '*Rights of Man*' that one cannot be bound by decisions taken by our preceding generations. We are free to take our own decisions and act as we feel is in our best interests. Taking a piece of paper, authenticity of which is in doubt, as the basis of entire relationship is not tenable legally as well as morally. A relationship has to be between the minds and hearts of the people. It is the present generation which has to accept the relationship with an open heart and in the right frame of mind. If they do not accept it, nothing can force them to do that. A forced marriage does not survive for long. Indian leaders should take a lesson from history and try to win the hearts of Kashmiris rather than place all their bets on a piece of paper and force people to accept it with the might of the soldiers!

22.

WAITING FOR 'AZADI'

Kashmiris have now become too familiar with the word 'AZADI'. But what does 'AZADI' mean for a commoner in the valley? Firstly, freedom from day to day harassment of the security forces. Cordon and search. Frequent roadside checks. Nocturnal raids. Restricted movements in the night. Problems of living close to cantonments and security forces barracks set up in residential areas. All these actions have made it impossible for a Kashmiri to lead a peaceful life with self-respect and dignity.

On one hand any uniformed soldier or even an army commando in civilian clothes with a gun can herd him like cattle while on the other hand every rebel with a gun demands his total allegiance. He is torn between the devil and the deep sea. Violence is unpredictable and it can erupt anywhere any time. A citizen's very existence is threatened from all sides. So the first 'AZADI' is the 'right to life', freedom to survive and lead one's own life as one pleases with guaranteed security. Next comes the freedom of expression. The 'AZADI' to express one's view freely without any fear in public. At present it is practically impossible to do so. The Government for whatever reason or cause it may be, does not tolerate any procession, or public meet-

ing other than those organised by the pro-establishment parties. Section 144 banning the assembly of more than four persons in public is perennially enforced throughout the valley. Even religious processions taken out on Muharram are not allowed. Bunkers, pillboxes, and roadside blockades are not so much to stop the onslaught of militants as to prevent massive gatherings of people on the roads and in the streets.

If these restrictions on free public expression are lifted, Government is scared that it may have millions on the roads asking for 'AZADI'. They cannot forget the events of 1990 when almost entire population of Kashmir was on the roads demanding 'AZADI'. Next comes the 'AZADI' from want. Marx once said that to be free, man must be first fed. In Kashmir it is the reverse. By and large there is no serious problem on feeding the people. No body starves in Kashmir. Situation is quite comfortable compared to some other parts of the sub-continent where people in millions live below the poverty line. Those unfortunate people do not even classify to be designated as poor! However, the situation could be much better for Kashmiris and they would be able to lead more prosperous lives had they the freedom to do so.

There are more than three hundred thousand educated unemployed youth in Kashmir. These include Doctors, Engineers, Management Graduates, Computer Engineers, Software Developers, and Experts in many other fields. It is very rarely that a Kashmiri Muslim youth gets a job anywhere in India. Only Kashmiri Pandits are preferred. Unfortunately these unemployed youth are not even allowed to go abroad freely to find jobs. They could have earned a lot of foreign exchange without causing any problems. Even if some militants use this channel for going abroad, it would not be such a serious problem for the Government. In fact they could be more easily trailed. They are crossing and re-crossing the Line of Control, and that too with lethal

arms!

Another 'AZADI', which is lacking is the freedom to use and to safeguard our own natural resources. We cannot use our own water to generate power. For no fault of ours we have to face a perennial shortage of power in spite of having the capacity to generate more than 20,000 megawatts of it. Our Forests have enough capacity to generate a host of herbs, medicinal plants and other flora to enable setting up of many perfumeries and pharmaceutical units. However, these forests need to be first safeguarded against the vandalism, which is going on unabated and unchecked. Same is the case with our water resources. Instead of being the main attraction for the historical City of the Sun, these are turning slowly into stinking marshes. Tourism could be our greatest resource but security forces occupy the prime areas in our potential tourist resorts. Moreover, to develop this sector of our economy we need 'AZADI' from uncertainty which has been plaguing Kashmir for ages now.

No body from within the State or outside is willing to invest in this atmosphere of total uncertainty. Thus all these 'AZADIS' are interlinked. Kashmir can get emancipated and march on the road to progress and prosperity only when we get the main 'AZADI', for which every one has been pinning so long. Who will get us this 'AZADI'? Who will lead the way? Not the present breed of leaders who are more concerned with their own appearance and image than the well being of the people. Each one of them is going in his own individual direction. If their aim is to achieve the same 'AZADI' for everyone then why so many outfits and organizations? India got 'AZADI' because the movement for it was led by a group of dedicated and sincere leaders with one single purpose and one single organisation. Pakistan became a reality because the movement for its creation was led by a single sincere and honest leader supported

by a single dedicated and well knit organisation. The greatest misfortune of Kashmiris is that they have neither a single honest and sincere leader nor a single dedicated organisation to support such a leader.

People living in posh villas, wearing designer clothes and driving around in luxurious cars cannot get 'AZADI'. Vested interests always try to groom and patronise these types of leaders whom they can mould to their way of thinking. The honest and genuine leaders either get exiled or rot in jails and in some extreme cases get liquidated. The present brand of leaders have failed to show the people the way to get any of the 'AZADISI' mentioned above, not talk of the ultimate 'AZADI'. They are themselves waiting for an abstract 'AZADI' without knowing what it is all about and how to get it!

Gandhi and Jinnah led very strong popular movements for Khadi, Salt and 'Home for Muslims' respectively by mobilising millions. Kashmiris did get a leader of very 'tall' stature who had the capability to mobilise people but unfortunately he got confused and fatigued and could not resist worldly temptations and left us in absolute lurch. The new breed of leaders should do what Gandhi and Jinnah did for their people if they want Kashmiris to be emancipated. Instead of dreaming and waiting for abstract 'AZADI', they should lead and mobilise people to save Kashmir, its people, its environment and its resources. In a situation of cross conflict, violence does not solve matters but compounds these. If there is a true and strong desire to be free, one does not need violence to reinforce it. Only the urge to get it is sufficient.

So the need of the hour is universal urge for 'AZADI'. Once people want it sincerely and genuinely, no one can stop them from getting it. It depends upon the capability, sincerity and honesty of our present leaders if they can create this urge. If they fail, they will be rejected and a

new leadership will emerge and the failed ones will not even be consigned to History, as it very rarely keeps a record of the failed leaders.

23.

**KASHMIR'S ADMINISTRATION, A
COLONIAL SET UP**

The British Colonists who entered India in the garb of East India Company after finally annexing it to their Empire, had created a federal administrative service called ICS, (Indian Civil Service) to ensure running of their writ throughout the length and breadth of the country. This was an imperial service loyal to the British Crown created to keep the colony under control as part of the Empire. After the departure of the British, the 'Indian Ruling Elite' instead of disbanding this vestige of imperialism and colonialism converted it into IAS, (Indian Administrative Service) with almost the same purpose and functions. Earlier they were loyal and answerable to the British Crown in England and now they are loyal and reporting to 'Dilli Durbar'. The new Government did not stop there but created a number of internal and external central services, such as IPS, (Indian Police Service), IFS, (Indian Forest Service), IRS, (Indian Revenue Service), IAAS, (Indian Accounts and Audit Service), IPS, (Indian Postal Service), and IFS, (Indian Foreign Service).

It is a pity that after independence India opted for the British Model of Governance. Had the rulers taken a lesson from the history, they would have realised that

the Presidential system would have been a better choice. India had been ruled for ages by the Kings and Queens who were considered to be divine representatives on this Earth. The masses especially in the rural areas would have considered an elected President as a King or Queen which in fact happened in the case of the Nehru dynasty when majority of people worshipped Indira Gandhi as a 'Queen' (Rani). Instead of Union of India, it would have been better to have a United States of India with a complete federal structure. India should have been a group of fully autonomous States ruled by elected Governors with an elected President at Delhi. This would have reflected the India's unity in diversity in the real sense.

However, the unitary system adopted created a feeling of the States being ruled as colonies by the 'Political Elite' in Delhi. This feeling is far more pronounced in the Muslim majority State of Jammu & Kashmir where people have lacked opportunities as well as have been reluctant to join these Central Services unlike other States, which has resulted in a total imbalance in the ratio of local to outside officers manning important administrative and other positions in different services. The ratio is supposed to be 30% to 70% but in actual practice it is even less than that. Normally it should have been 50:50. The state did create a local level administrative service, KAS, (Kashmir Administrative Service). However, all the important posts in different wings of the State Administration in the Civil Secretariat as well as in the field are encadred in the J & K Cadre of the Indian Administrative and other Central Services. The officers of Kashmir's local services come up to middle rung posts only. The Government prefers to keep key positions vacant rather than assign these to middle rung local officers.

The promotion and induction into central services from the state services is so slow, irregular, unbalanced, erratic,

and sometimes ad hoc that there are always more directly recruited officers than the local promotees. This results in key positions most of the time going to outside state officers. The Chief Secretary, the Director General Police, most of the administrative secretaries, the major heads of department, senior police and civil administration officers in provinces, districts and so on are most of the time from outside the state. No doubt the direct recruits to the services though from outside are sometimes officers of exceptional talent and are also in a number of cases very progressive and upright. Unfortunately, the most upright, honest, intelligent, and talented officers from this cadre were never allowed an undisturbed stay in the state. Most of the time these were sent on central deputation as and when they dared to oppose the doings of tainted politicians. But local officers if given a chance could prove equally good.

It was only during the period of Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah as the State Chief Minister from 1975 to 1982 that local officers got some key positions. It is said that Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah in the last phase of his life was very sad and felt very much guilty about the fate of Kashmiris. He tried his best to alleviate their position and made some efforts to take a few steps to safeguard their future interests. The introduction of Resettlement Bill in the state legislature which allows Kashmiris (who had earlier migrated outside country) to return here is one such step. Even though the Bill ultimately got passed as an Act, it still remains in limbo (through some Public Interest Litigation) because of the attitude of Central Government who dread the return of old Kashmiris.

The other step was the boosting of the local administrative services which allowed a large number of Kashmiri Officers to get posted to key positions. The outside Officers nick named this group the 'Kashmir Syndicate'. In turn they were called the 'Delhi Caucus' or the 'IAS

Maha Sabah'. During this period Kashmiris did have some control over the State Administration. However, the subsequent rulers diluted this control and the new 'East India Company' again became effective. At the present moment almost all key positions in all spheres of administration except a few, are manned by non-Kashmiri as well as non-Muslim officers thereby making it a totally colonial or imperial set up working at the bidding of 'Dilli Durbar'.

Till the mid fifties when the State Constitution still had some sanctity, the Office of Sadr-i- Riyast was a titular position of a state-subject kept alive to allow the heirs of the monarchical era to continue their stay in Kashmir. However, after its conversion into the Office of the Governor, it became the seat of the British Viceroy of old days; only the British Crown got replaced by 'Dilli Durbar'. In the past there used to be some prominent scholars and intellectuals posted as Governors such as Bhagwan Sahay, L K Jha, B K Nehru but subsequently after the turmoil of 1990 mostly retired Army Generals or Intelligence Officers have been given this assignment by the rulers in Delhi. If a Kashmiri is to be restored his 'Self-respect and dignity', the set up has to change.

Recently there has been talk of demilitarisation and self-governance. Total demilitarisation may be a distant dream but the restoration of civil authority may be possible. The draconian legislation giving unbridled powers to the security forces needs to be withdrawn as a first step. Secondly, the troops must go back to barracks. All civilian areas must be cleared of security forces. It should not be difficult for the local Police to maintain law and order should they decide to do so or rather should they be allowed to do so on their own. We have over a hundred thousand of these. But there is one catch! The 'Self-Governance' has to be effected through locals and not through the members of a 'Colonial set up' or through an elected Governor

who does not function at the bidding of the 'Dilli Durbar'. This will involve the return of these officers to their home States or Delhi and posting of local officers on all key positions. Governor may also have to be an intellectual or an upright politician of repute (These days this is a rare commodity!).

However, the big question would be whether Delhi would have the courage to go thus far? Also, will they trust such an arrangement? There is no indication like that. On the contrary, Delhi seems to be resigned to the ground reality of total alienation and has taken a deliberate decision that Kashmir has to be kept regardless of Kashmiris no matter what the cost internally or globally. Within these parameters they are trying to bring local people on their side internally by repeatedly announcing off and on various economic packages while at the same time they are projecting externally through various diplomatic moves a 'Gentleman's Face' ready for accommodation with the local people. It is a typical carrot and stick approach which was indulged in by the erstwhile 'East India Company'.

However, in the end even after a very long stay of 200 years the British had to pack their bags and go home. But they did give many things to India. The modern education, a new capital (Luytens Delhi), India Gate, President's House, the Gateway of India, and a host of other landmarks. What has Kashmir got? A total mess in everything. Tremendous human and material loss. Distorted culture and loss of heritage. Pill boxes and bunkers every where. And over and above everything, a very uncertain future!

24.

THE GIFTS OF WAR

Every human conflict invariably destroys life as well as property. Society gets shattered. However, most of the wars that are terrible and destructive, sometimes unintentionally result in some gifts for humanity, which prove a God sent boon. The most important gift of the Second World War was the discovery of penicillin, the antibiotic. This single event was able to save millions of lives and humanity is still grateful for this discovery. The same war resulted in the perfection of the rocket engine, which ultimately propelled man to the moon. As the scientists of the combatants untiringly search for newer weapons to destroy each other, they often stumble upon the positive uses of these discoveries. A conflict always results in human misery but unwittingly there are sometimes positive side effects, which might not have occurred otherwise. The turmoil of last decade and a half in Kashmir has turned the entire society up side down. There has been terrible human loss. Property has been destroyed. Social set up has been adversely affected. The prolonged state of uncertainty has caused a psychological trauma for almost the entire population.

The first positive effect of this conflict has been the open-

ing of the outside world to Kashmiris. The valley people have remained confined to this small piece of land for centuries. Even in ancient times they were very reluctant to leave this place voluntarily. Most of the temporary or permanent migrations were under one or the other compulsion, natural or man made. The situation has dramatically changed now. Not only have Kashmiris gone all over the world for business and in search of jobs but also for education. There is not a single well-known tourist destination within the country or even abroad where one does not meet a Kashmiri trader/hawker selling handicrafts. Some people go on temporary rounds selling shawls and a host of other embroidery items etc. Some have established permanent outlets. There are more than 100 kiosks of Kashmiris selling small handicraft items on the beach resort of Mahabalipuram in Tamilnadu. Kochi, the famous town of the country's present top foreign tourist destination, Kerala, known as 'God's Own Country', has more than 40 permanent handicraft stores of Kashmiris. Goa is almost like a second home to Kashmiri traders.

In foreign destinations, U.A.E. alone has over 300 Kashmiri outlets. There are people in Bangkok, Colombo, Singapore, Malaysia, and many other places selling handicrafts. A Kashmiri chain owns one of the top most carpet stores on the Fifth Avenue, in Manhattan, New York. Most of these outlets have opened up during the course of the present turmoil. Apart from the traders going out to personally sell these wares, there has been a big boost in exports. According to the figures of Export Promotion Council of India, the carpet exports from Kashmir increased phenomenally during last decade or so. The main reason for this has been the elimination of middlemen and the direct exposure of Kashmiri exporters to foreign buyers. Earlier export houses from Delhi or Mumbai used to buy from Kashmiris and in turn export to foreign markets. Now Kashmiris have set up their own offices in these metros and

are handling exports themselves.

Moreover, in the earlier case there was a limited channel for export in Srinagar. Now these items are first taken to Delhi, sometimes by road and then exported from there. The exporters have a choice because of dozens of channels available in Delhi and other major cities for export. Apart from handicrafts, a group of young Kashmiri entrepreneurs have been exporting spices worth millions to many countries in Europe and Middle East. The greatest handicap faced by some young exporters is the lack of post production/harvest infrastructure in Kashmir. Had the Government paid attention to this aspect, Kashmiri products from a variety of fields would have been competing in international markets. If some of these entrepreneurs could set up such facilities on their own, this could be another solution.

The other aspect of society, which has received a tremendous boost, is the initiative of Kashmiri boys and girls to travel to distant lands for higher education. Normally Kashmiri parents were reluctant to send their wards, especially girls, even within different parts of this country for higher education. Not now. They have been personally taking their wards to distant lands for education in Medicine, Information Technology, and Business Management and so on. Our boys and girls are studying in Russia, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Malaysia, Singapore, Australia, Canada and a host of other countries. We have now a large number of Russian trained doctors, even though unfortunately quite a few are without jobs. Most interesting aspect of this outflow for education is that a large number of boys and girls are from rural areas that have had a lesser exposure to the outside world. After getting all the education from some of the top most institutions, our boys and girls still remain unemployed.

There are reasons for this lack of opportunities for Kashmir. Reluctance of employers within the country to give jobs to people of Kashmiri origin especially the younger lot. There is an inability of these educated unemployed youth to go abroad easily because of hassles involved in getting passports. The most discouraging fallout of the turmoil has been to make Kashmiris suspect everywhere. A number of countries think twice before issuing visas to young people from Kashmir. The only places where they do not have much difficulty are the Middle Eastern countries. If only the Government would accelerate the issue of passports to qualified youth, they could get a large number of these people employed in the Middle East.

A short-lived boon of the conflict had been daylight marriages. In the early years of the present turmoil due to prolonged night curfews and hassles faced in mid night travel on different routes, the people had switched over to performing marriage ceremonies along with accompanying feasts during daylight hours. This had greatly eased the situation of the marriage parties, which would in normal times, carry on throughout the night. One would often be served food after midnight. However, with the improvement in situation, people have switched back to nocturnal ceremonies and feasts.

A very significant side effect of the turmoil has been the real estate boom and mushrooming of shopping complexes in Srinagar and other major towns of the valley. It is debatable whether it is a positive or a negative effect. Normally all hot spots of conflict face massive destruction such as Beirut, Kabul, and Baghdad. But in our case it has been the reverse. There has been a mad construction spree as well as rush of land acquisitions all over Kashmir. This has not only shot up construction costs but even the land prices have touched an all time high. The villas,

which have already come up or under construction are some of the best anywhere in architectural designs and utilisation of special building materials. Some even have imported fittings and fixtures. Almost every residential area has now more than three to four multi-storey shopping complexes. One would have preferred these things to come up only in commercial areas to ensure privacy of the residences but we are, like the British, slowly turning into a 'Nation of Shopkeepers' and do not hesitate to construct a shopping line on one side of our own private homes. We may give up all bad habits but not the material greed. After all, according to some researchers, we do have a streak of Jewish blood running through our veins!

25.

THE OTHER SIDE OF TURMOIL

1990 constitutes a turning point for many things in Kashmir. It is the year in which the present turmoil erupted with full force and turned every thing upside down. The decades of the seventies and eighties had seen some of the best times in Kashmir. Apparently everything seemed to be going smoothly. Tourism reached an all time high with the arrival of more than seven hundred thousand tourists in 1988-89 including about 70 thousand foreigners. However, no one could judge that a revolt was simmering beneath the calm surface. No doubt people had been aspiring right from the July 1931 uprising for fulfilment of the desire for total freedom or 'Azadi' but the events of 1947 had put everything into utter chaos and confusion. The popular leaders of that time had themselves got confused and divided in loyalties between the two conflicting ideologies. Repeated ideological somersaults of the leadership resulted in its being superseded by popular uprisings from time to time and its ultimate and final rejection in 1990.

The first big uprising came in 1953 with the unceremonious removal and caging of the 'Lion of Kashmir' who very unfortunately in the end stopped roaring and was totally tamed by Mrs. Gandhi. Most probably he be-

came fatigued and confused. He would still be remembered as the tallest leader that Kashmir has so far produced due to the revolutionary land reforms, which the rest of the sub-continent has yet to see. Incidentally there are no lions in Kashmir. It has Leopards, Cheetahs, and Panthers only.

The second uprising came in 1963 with the disappearance of the holy relic of the Prophet, PBUH, from the Hazratbal mosque. Again there was a shaking in the leadership and a group of youth came up to challenge the traditional stockholders. But the events of 1965 during which the movement was hijacked by outside forces, completely scuttled the emergence of a totally new leadership. Revolutions cannot be exported. These grow in situ over a period of time and start in the minds of people. Sometimes one feels that both the claimants of the State by their actions seem to virtually join hands in eliminating the genuine and honest local leadership. The same process has started repeating itself after the final uprising of 1990. This event too completely removed the traditional leadership and a new generation of youth took over but in a very violent and aggressive mood. They were practically forced into this situation by their failure to plead their cause in a democratic and liberal way.

A large number of Muslim youth had come together under the umbrella of MUF (Muslim United Front). It was a conglomerate of various parties agitating for establishment of Islamic Rule with the realisation of a free Kashmir. Probably they had been convinced that it would be better for them to enter the State Assembly and project their cause to the world from this forum. To achieve this, for the first time persons with declared goal of absolute freedom decided to fight the elections being held under the supervision of the Central Election Commission of India. Unfortunately seeing the tremendous enthusiasm of people for this election, the rulers both in Delhi as well as Srinagar

got panicky and rigged these elections, which could have been a turning point in favour of India.

The selfish and greedy behaviour of a few so called 'mainstream' politicians, turned this event into the beginning of total and final alienation of the people of Kashmir from India! The candidates, the polling agents, and all the young workers of MUF became militant leaders. Quite a few of these were arrested and put behind bars under various preventive detention laws. A single incident of the kidnapping and subsequent release of Rubiya Sayed, the daughter of Mufti Mohammad Sayed, the then Home Minister of India, in exchange for the release of some top militant leaders opened the floodgates of a turmoil, which is still continuing.

A National Liberation Movement started under the aegis of the Jammu & Kashmir Liberation Front received a colossal and massive popular response. People from all walks of life came onto the roads in hundreds of thousands demanding 'Azadi' (freedom). Such a massive movement for total and absolute 'Azadi' unnerved both the Governments at Delhi and Islamabad and it got hijacked, as both never wanted the local people to pursue an independent and sovereign outlook. The confusion and chaos created by external intervention from both sides has resulted in an absolutely messy situation with no solution in sight. The years of turmoil completely shattered the day-to-day normal life of the people. The Social fabric got twisted and distorted. Kashmiri Pandits left en masse in panic to save their lives. The environment faced the worst degradation in the shortest span of time, which it had not experienced in centuries. The human loss was massive. Almost an entire generation got wiped out. Worse than that is the psychological trauma experienced by one and all. In spite of all this some still claim that Kashmir is 'normal'. Yes it is normal for tourists visiting for a short period. No one

molests or hurts them in the true traditions of our hospitality for outside guests. But how many people laugh and smile? Tension is writ on the faces of people everywhere. Because of our adaptability to the ravages of time we never show it. Our patience borders on passivity. But there is also a dark side to this turmoil.

The intelligence agencies of both the countries pumped in huge amounts of money to counter each other's moves. The weakest spots of our character have been encouraged, groomed, and fully exploited with this money, which has found many takers. This process has given rise to the 'nouveau riche' in our society. If there has been a total shattering of the economy, then how come palatial houses, shopping complexes and other Real Estate units have come up in abnormal numbers during these years? What is the real source of these funds? These have either come from Delhi directly or through Dubai, Kathmandu or Dacca.

Funds have also been coming from Kashmiris living and working in various foreign countries as reportedly collections are made in the name of 'Suffering Kashmiris' in all parts of the world. It is a moot point as to what percentage of these funds actually reaches the real 'Suffering Kashmiris'. Probably a major portion of these gets invested in Real Estate and the rest is used in extravagance. The easy money of the nouveau riche has resulted in a mad competition in many of our social customs such as marriages and other ceremonies. Apart from the unfortunate practice of dowry, the feasts given on these occasions have assumed such frightening proportions that a poor man cannot think of marrying away his daughter in a decent way. The venue decorators and beauticians are flown in from Delhi and other metros. Even a sombre event of a death in families has become an occasion for competing in presenting massive fruit baskets!

The number of cars of all makes and types on

Srinagar streets has grown exponentially resulting in terrible traffic jams. The pop culture of the 'High Society' has introduced the drug menace to our youth. Centuries old traditions and culture is heading for a slow death. Even the Kashmiri language is disappearing from the homes as parents talk to their children in Urdu or English rather than in Kashmiri. Modernisation is welcome but that does not mean multiplying of social evils. Someone needs to put a stop to these mad competitions in social customs. Let the elders and intellectuals ponder about this and suggest a solution. It is also food for thought to the younger generation.

A movement for the highest ideals of freedom is a pious and honourable struggle. We need very urgently to reform our society to maintain the sanctity of the goals and the means to achieve these, lest the dark other side of turmoil overtakes us.

26.

THE INDO-PAK BLAME GAME

Once again the two neighbouring countries are back to square one. They have re-started their decades old 'Blame Game'. This Game has always been the beginning of hype towards a conflict and has been often resorted to by both the sides to divert the attention of their teeming millions from the more pressing and realistic basic issues of day to day living. It is a confirmation of the fact that the 'beneficiaries of conflict' are stronger than the ones pleading for peace and tranquillity in the region. One is tempted to ask a question whether the leaders were sincere and genuine in the first place when they proclaimed from roof tops the initiation of the peace process. Starting with the symbolic breach in the sub-continent's 'Berlin Wall', the 'Line of Control', by starting a fortnightly bus service, the process had been gaining momentum and was acclaimed all over the world as the beginning of a new era in the relations between these neighbours who had been in a state of continuous conflict for over half century.

A number of confidence building measures were initiated and it was repeatedly declared by the leaders of the two countries that the peace process is irreversible. Both sides

were proceeding very cautiously and the maximum bonhomie had started developing between the elite on two sides. Unfortunately, the interaction had not percolated below the 'cocktail circuit'. One must realise that the mistrust of centuries cannot be overcome overnight especially when there are numerous vested interests benefiting from the situation of conflict. The friendship at the five star levels cannot withstand the emotional upsurge generated by interested parties in the grass roots people on two sides.

It is not the first time that efforts at building peace and friendship have been wrecked by such events. There are several examples where the two sides came so near but were again torn apart by similar events in the past. There is only one conclusion. The mistrust is too deep. The confidence building measures are simply treating the symptoms and the disease continues to afflict both the sides. These are only pain relievers and not the real medicine for the ultimate treatment and cure. Any genuine attempt at solving the difficult issues such as Siachin Glacier, Sir Creek, Wular Barrage, Baghliar and so on gets frustrated due to basic mistrust. Not to speak of Kashmir, which is a highly emotive and volatile issue for both the sides.

The first priority for both sides is to develop the basic trust and that too at grass roots level. This needs some very drastic steps. The Indians have to genuinely and honestly reconcile to the partition of their country and accept the creation of Pakistan regardless of the reasons which prompted its creation. Pakistanis have to consider themselves as the citizens of this sub-continent and not residents or representatives of the extended Arab lands. No doubt religion unites Muslims all over the world yet they continue their cultural roots as Turks, Iranians, Tunisians, Algerians, and Indonesian etc. Pakistanis have their roots in the sub-continent and are not outsiders as portrayed by

some fanatic groups in India, and by some of their own extremist groups in Pakistan.

Apart from the historical conflict between the two communities due to the invasions from outside, the greatest trauma is of partition itself. Till the arrival of the British, the Indians had jointly faced the outside invaders. There was no conflict on the basis of religion. The conflict was introduced by the British from the first war of Independence of 1857, which they call the Mutiny. During their 200 year long occupation they perfected the policy of divide and rule and sowed the seeds of a conflict which seems irreconcilable.

Due to their continuous attempts at poisoning the minds of local people, the two sides take differing views about certain historical events. The Indians consider Mahmood of Ghazni and Ahmad Shah Abdali as hated invaders while as Pakistanis are taught to respect them as heroes and great fighters. They even name their missiles and rockets after them. Even though the British have physically left the sub-continent, yet they continue to rule us by proxy and maintain a very subtle and invisible hold on all the affairs of the countries of the region. To support them and do their bidding they have very cleverly created westernized elite in both countries. They claim to be liberal, progressive, intellectual, and secular. However, in actual practice quite a few of them still harbour old prejudices and have streaks of fanaticism just under the skin. The political set up in both the countries is in the hands of 'professionals'.

The young and budding generations try to remain aloof from the political mainstream or rather they are kept away! They usually opt for some decent jobs in multinational corporations and in a large number of cases they prefer to leave their native countries for good. Politics has become a very lucrative profession. People invest huge amounts of money in getting elected and then

during their tenure after election they try to recover the same with a sizeable profit. There is a dearth of leaders who are in the field just for the sake of ideology or high moral values. These people are always on the lookout for any excuses to divert the attention of masses from real issues.

'Blame Game' is the best alternative. In Police terms the easiest thing is to close a case unsolved. The 'unidentified', unknown, and untraced are the best short cuts to close every type of investigation. No body has the courage to admit intelligence failures before the event and incompetence in investigations after the event. The best is to apportion the blame on a known enemy in such a vague and confusing way that can never be proved or unproved. India has over a dozen Naxalite and rebel movements in different regions. We cannot blame everything on Pakistan. This is too simplistic an excuse. We should rather be looking at the causes of these upheavals so that these are remedied to restore peace.

Similarly, Pakistan has a large number of areas of unrest such as Balochistan, Waziristan, Northern Areas, and parts of Sindh. Instead of trying to redress the under lying causes, they too look for scapegoats to apportion the blame. These games are bound to continue till there is honest and genuine leadership on both sides which is not only popular but also capable of taking historic and momentous decisions to end the era of mistrust. In the meantime, the worst sufferers of the conflict are unfortunate Kashmiris. There seems to be some sort of a curse on the people which always prevents a solution when it is almost at hand.

In the alternative, the people seem to have become insensitive to such a level that these things do not matter to them at all! Dr. Iqbal has said that God does not change the condition of a people who do not have their own urge to change it. In the present circumstances, the two neighbouring countries do not seem to be in a hurry to sort out their prob-

lems including the so called 'Core Issue' of Kashmir. It is now for the people to show whether they have the urge to change their condition or they wish to continue to live like vegetables as they have lived for last four centuries or so. Such an urge does not necessarily have to be violent to manifest itself.

An unflinching belief in one's convictions is enough to bring a change for the better and enable realisation of the goal. Do we have the right leaders? That is the million dollar question!

27.

INDO-PAK MISTRUST, THE CORE ISSUE!

Kashmir has been quite often described as the 'Core Issue' between India and Pakistan. It has been often claimed that there would be peace in the sub-continent once this issue is resolved. A deeper analysis of the problem will show that Kashmir is the symptom and not the disease. The real problem is the unending mistrust between the two countries. Unless this basic problem is addressed, there will be no peace.

Unfortunately, most of our leaders try to avoid facing this real 'Core Issue' and try to live in a make believe world of their own. The English phrase, 'Live be in Cloud-Cuckoo-Land' aptly describes the thinking of some of our present leaders in Kashmir. According to Cambridge dictionary it means, 'Not be realistic but to think that things which are completely impossible might happen'. For past sometime these people have been giving numerous fantastic and totally unrealistic statements and sermons. One wonders whether they really understand the ground situation. Leaders living in 'Secure' residences and moving in bullet proof cars escorted by commandos tend to be out of touch with the pulse of the people. On the contrary, they could also intentionally want to remain aloof from the basic problems in

spite of being fully aware of them! There does not seem to be any other reason for pursuing public stands which are grossly out of tune with the ground situation.

The latest instance is the exposure of fake encounters and continued killings by the security forces. Graves upon graves of innocent Kashmiris who had been murdered in cold blood in fake encounters and labelled as Pakistani militants are being discovered every day. The tragic part is that most of these executions were carried out for monetary considerations and to win acclaim from superiors. This is only one face of the stark human rights violations being faced by the locals all over the state. Other privacy intrusions like road side checks, frequent frisking, cordon and search, and unrestrained beatings of virtually entire civilian population irrespective of age and gender, after encounters with militants seem minor irritants compared to other heinous offences being committed on a regular basis. There is always an excuse of collateral damage and mistaken identity. The security forces have been turned virtually into 'Man Eaters'. They have got a taste of human blood.

The worst are the gangs of serial killers called 'Friendlies' operated and patronized by them all over the state. SOG (Special Operations Group) is a totally different kind of nightmare. Given this ground situation, the utterances of almost all mainstream leaders and some other leaders heading the popular movement seem totally unrealistic. People have been talking of cross LOC trade and tourism, which keeps on moving theoretically from one obstacle to other. The dates about the visit of proposed trade delegations keep on changing on day to day basis. Others are even talking of common currency or use of both currencies on two sides of the border. Exchange of trade delegations has been on the cards now for almost a year! In fact, the other side has offered gas and power for Kashmir val-

ley.

It is a wonderful offer as it can overcome the perennial energy shortage of Kashmir.

In fact the Pakistan Government should be generous enough to accommodate sharing of the river as well as storage power projects in J & K to give some relief to Kashmiris. However, these generous offers seem out of place when one compares these with the ground situation on this side of the LOC. Unless there is a change in the attitude of the security forces the power would be for lighting of interrogation centres and grave yards! How can people be so naive? Leave aside these high flown confidence building measures, it is not even possible to communicate by phone from the Indian to Pakistani side of LOC or even to the Pakistan mainland between relatives separated by these false boundaries.

In this age of information technology there is no direct dialling facility from here to there. The funniest thing is that these security barriers collapse if one goes with a GSM phone with global roaming near the border. One gets easily connected to all Pakistani cellular networks which have range even right up to Jammu city. Same is the case with Thuraya Sat Phones. These are operable all over the state with pre-paid satellite cards freely available anywhere in the world. However, the mutual mistrust does not allow the suffering Kashmiris the use of this facility.

There seems to be dichotomy between what is transpiring between the heads of governments on the two sides of the divide and the actual happenings both on the ground in Kashmir and in the declarations of various responsible spokesmen of the two countries within the state and outside. A young leader, after return from the other side, claimed that some momentous things would be happening within next two to three months. He gave an impression that the Kashmir solution is round the corner. On the other

hand India's national security advisor declared in a foreign country that Pakistan was still involved in cross border terrorism and was actively supporting the militant organisations.

Sometimes the heads of different security agencies claim that infiltration has drastically come down while others in the same breath accuse Pakistan of facilitating infiltration. Amusingly it is the mainstream parties which are at present very vocal in demanding a stop to human rights violations. They have even demanded various types of commissions to probe all violations, especially disappearances and custodial killings since 1989. Funniest thing is that these parties are vying with each other in mutual allegations and bickering in terms of the English proverb, 'Pot calling the kettle black'! They are not even ashamed of washing their dirty linen in public under the gaze of the media. Finally, they end up by going as far as the collar in their neck and the chain tied to it would allow them to go.

In sharp contrast to this, the leaders of the popular movement seem to be totally involved in an unfortunate clash of egos. They too are giving confusing signals. Sometimes President Musharraf is denounced for a sell-out while as at the other times he is praised for his flexibility and sagacity. There are so many interpretations of his four point formula going around that a book can be written about it.

Diplomacy is travelling on a number of parallel tracks but is yet to reach the main track. Recently a reader had remarked that the writers about Kashmir are being very pessimistic and are down playing the peace process. This is not true. Every one desires peace. It is in the interests of the whole sub-continent or rather the entire South Asia. However, the peace cannot be theoretical. It has to be practically seen on the ground.

One may sound redundant or very repetitive but the

fact has to be admitted that the ground situation in Kashmir is not improving but on the contrary deteriorating sharply. Peoples' anger is slowly but surely mounting. The daily demonstrations all over the valley against the disappearances are testimony to the gathering storm. In spite of this rising storm there is no decline in killings by the security forces on one pretext or the other.

However, all these continuing gross human rights violations do not seem to make any difference to either the State or the Central Government. All these situations are routine now. It appears that all the grandiose and lofty declarations of mutual trust and friendship between the two countries are for public consumption. In actual practice, the statements issued by various functionaries concerned with the ground reality very vividly demonstrate the lack of trust.

The Indian side claimed that it had sent Pakistan a proposal for relaxing the visa regime. A few days later news came that Pakistan had rejected it. Pakistan Foreign Minister announced that the Siachen agreement was about to be clinched. Immediately the reply from Indian side came that there can be no compromise about the authentication of the actual ground position. The two sides appear to be playing some sort of games at different levels. Apart from the two governments, there are numerous very powerful lobbies on both sides having the capabilities to dismantle whatever mutual trust gets built up by various confidence building measures. They can, at their sweet will, precipitate an incident on either side to bring the edifice of peace tumbling down. This is because the trust is superficial and fragile on both sides.

We cannot move forward unless we realise that the 'Core Issue' is their mutual mistrust. We have to rise above the so called 'National Interests' on both sides and forget all the 'Security Reasons' to really open up to each other. Unless we do that, we will continue to live in cloud-cuckoo-land

and the lasting peace will continue to elude us!

28.

WRITING ON THE WALL

The English have a proverb to describe the stark and vivid truth- 'Writing on the Wall'! This saying aptly describes the happenings in Kashmir these days. The politicians who had been swearing by Kashmir's accession to the Indian Union have suddenly started softening their rigid stands. For almost half century they were never bothered about the basic and fundamental problem plaguing Kashmiris as well as the people of the entire sub-continent. They had a one point programme. To get, by all possible means, all the good things of life for their own self above everything else. Ideals, convictions, and the people did not matter.

They have suddenly woken from their decade's old slumber. All of them seem now to be very much concerned with 'Human Rights Violations' and are even preaching virtual independence for Kashmir. What has made them see the 'Writing on the Wall'? There is one simple answer. The rapidly growing alienation of Kashmiris. The alienation has reached a breaking point especially in rural areas where people are facing a situation worse than being a colony. Kashmiris are seething with anger against India.

It does not show up normally. It manifests off and on

during some unusual events such as custodial killings, funerals of militants killed in encounters, or some other incidents connected with the on going movement. Having undergone centuries of oppression and seen some of the worst episodes of external rule, the local people have perfected a methodology of survival, if you cannot beat them, join them!

It is only in extreme emergencies when it is a question of life and death that they react vehemently. An outsider can never know what is in the heart of a Kashmiri. There is mutual tacit understanding among the local people that we can go this far and no further. However, whenever there is an opportunity they strike, to the utter surprise of an outsider. The mainstream leaders who are from among the local people know all these basic home truths. They may sense that something is brewing, and that they may have to face the wrath of the ordinary masses, those whom they had neglected and taken for granted.

After all, they are living like prisoners of the security agencies themselves. Z-Category, Z Plus- Category and so on. How long will they live like that? How long will their kith and kin live like that? If one fine morning all these security apparatuses are withdrawn, what will happen to them? These questions must be troubling them. The happenings

Of 1963 and the chain of disassociation ads of 1990 must be still fresh in their minds. So the best bet for them is to swim with the tide but with life-jackets on. However, a million dollar question is; will Kashmir's suffering masses accept their tactical change of heart?

President Musharraf has also seen the 'Writing on the Wall'. He has his hands full in Pakistan especially after 9-11. He probably seems to feel that after having fought three wars it has not been possible for Pakistan to take Kashmir away from India and join it to Pakistan. With the change in the scenario brought by nuclear weapons, a war can never

achieve such an objective. If ever such a clash occurs in future it will be the last war for the sub-continent, a virtual 'Armageddon'. There will be no winners but only losers including Kashmiris on whom it may be fought.

Moreover, Kashmiris are not now really in love with Pakistan. Rather, Pakistan to them has been a symbol of emancipation from India. They were pro-Pakistanis because Pakistan always sympathized with them in their fight against Indian oppression. If, for that matter, the Chinese or the Russians had sympathized with Kashmiris in equal measure, they would have been pro-Chinese or pro-Russian. There was a time when Kashmiris were strongly pro-American because America had extended full support to their struggle for freedom.

Robin Raphael, former Assistant Secretary of State from the US, due to her outspoken support for the Kashmiris cause, had become the most popular American lady in Kashmir during the peak of militancy, and she would roam unescorted through the lanes of old town without any fear.

President Musharraf must be aware of these facts, and that may be the reason for him not to insist on Kashmir becoming a part of Pakistan, unlike his predecessors who had completely ruled out any other option for Kashmiris. However, the only Pakistani leader whom Kashmiris will always remember is Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. His declaration to fight a thousand year war with India for Kashmiris had endeared him so much that in the entire sub-continent, Kashmir was the only place where people died in violent protests against his hanging by General Zia. After seeing the 'Writing on the Wall' Pakistan Government now seems to be reconciled to leaving Kashmiris to choose their own route for emancipation subject upon the condition that any future set up does not threaten it strategically regarding its defence and water sources, which emanate from here.

The people of Pakistan will continue to cherish the idea of Kashmir becoming Pakistan someday even though they are also slowly reconciling to the idea of letting Kashmiris decide their own fate. The progressive intelligentsia and the true visionaries in India too have seen the 'Writing on the Wall'. They have realised that it is not possible to bend an entire population to its whims with force. Kashmir cannot be maintained as a colony and a Police State for long. More than sixteen years of the worst kinds of oppression has not cowed down Kashmiris, and they have refused to reconcile to the status quo.

The intellectuals do concede that India is losing the battle for hearts even though it is able to contain the upheaval by sheer force. The extreme alienation is not in the long term interests of the country. The top brass of the country fully understands this, and also the fact that the situation may be irreversible because of the vicious circle in which security Forces and Militants are caught. They know that India cannot afford the economic drain brought on by this perennial conflict. India would not only have become a real super power but a genuine Welfare State but for the millstone of Kashmir around its neck.

On one hand are the teeming millions seeped in poverty requiring to be brought above the poverty line while as on the other hand guns and bullets are needed to keep unwilling Kashmiris under hold. The silent majority as well as all right thinking people fully know this stark truth and are willing to get out of this senseless and bloody mess.

However, there is also a strong and influential group which refuses to see the 'Writing on the Wall'. They have their own vested interests which can be furthered only in a situation of conflict and uncertainty. This group would like India to be a fanatic Hindu State where the minorities have to live like second class citizens. They would like to

throw all Muslims to the Arabs, and would like all Christians to be reconverted.

They do not understand that such an approach will ultimately result in its own disintegration. History has its own way of shaping the destiny of people. The British ruled India for 200 years but had to ultimately leave. Even the great empire of Chandra Gupta Maurya ultimately collapsed in spite of the genius of Chanakya. India could be a Great Power and a genuine Welfare State if these rulers could also see the 'Writing on the Wall'.

29.

INDEPENDENT KASHMIR

People's Conference leader Sajjad Lone's proposition for creating an 'Independent Muslim Kashmir' has drawn considerable adverse comments from many political quarters of both the mainstream as well as those leading the popular movement. The Indian as well as Pakistani leadership had already ruled out any possibility of Independent Kashmir, obviously for their own strategic reasons. One may have reservations about the concept of whether it should be a Muslim or a Nationalist Kashmir or whether it should comprise the valley with its periphery, the 'Greater Kashmir,' or whether it should be the whole erstwhile princely state of Jammu & Kashmir created by the Dogra rulers.

However it is difficult to understand why people should oppose so vehemently the very basic idea of restoring Kashmir back to the original status as existed in history for a very long time, an 'Independent Sovereign State'. Merely floating an idea does not change the status of a place. On one hand we are talking of a democratic set up with freedom of expression while as on the other hand we are not patient enough to even listen to an idea even if it may be of a revolutionary or unreasonable nature. It is said that a rea-

sonable man adopts himself to the ways of the world. An unreasonable man tries to adopt the world to his way of thinking. Therefore, all the progress in the world depends on the unreasonable man!

People have been advancing dozens of road maps and possible solutions for solving this knotty problem. One more idea does not alter the basic position. Both India and Pakistan may have their own covert reasons for not letting go of Kashmir at all costs but there is a third party, directly in the line of fire, the Kashmiris. Several reasons are advanced against Independent Kashmir. It is alleged that it will involve religious, ethnic, and cultural division of the erstwhile princely state. But the primary question is how did the state come into being in the first place? Not by voluntary union but by colonization.

If the state has to function as a single unit, it can do so only by the free will of the people of individual regions and not by external force. The unity under external compulsion is not a lasting one. The Soviet Union is a living example of this. It did not take more than 24 hours to disintegrate. Sometimes it is said that there is no economic viability for sustaining an Independent Kashmir. Again it is an absurd and ridiculous objection.

Even though Kashmir has sufficient resources by way of hydro-electric power, agriculture, horticulture, and tourism yet there are smaller states with lesser resources which are independent. Saint Kitts with a population of 75,000 is the smallest country in the world and a member of the United Nations. There are dozens of states smaller than Kashmir both in population and area which exist as independent sovereign states.

Sometimes it is said that Kashmir is landlocked and strategically located. What about Nepal? What about Bhutan? There are numerous states in similar situation which continue to be independent without any problem.

So let us not approach the solution with a closed or a biased mind but be free to entertain and discuss all possibilities.

The aim should be to evolve a consensus by discussing all possible solutions and formulations. The basic requirement is to make Kashmiris a party to the peace process. Presently both countries claim that they will decide Kashmir problem as per the aspirations of the Kashmiri people. There is no point ascertaining the aspirations after deciding the issue. Rather they should give Kashmiris the right to decide and this can only be done by involving them in the whole process right from the start so that the solution reached is evolutionary and not devolutionary.

30.

IS KASHMIR ECONOMICALLY VIABLE?

Every time some people talk about an Independent Kashmir, they are immediately silenced by the argument that it is not economically viable. This is a fallacy invented by the people who have virtually enslaved Kashmir economically during last 60 years. There is a general belief amply demonstrated by the scare created by closure of the road connecting Kashmir to rest of the world that we have become totally dependent on the outside world. Before one tries to analyse the gradual economic dependence to which Kashmir has been deliberately subjected, it would be useful to go over the possible resources which we can muster for economic survival. It needs to be emphasized in the very beginning that in the present global scenario, no state is totally independent economically, especially in the developing world. All states have come to be economically inter-dependent.

The first important resource we have in abundance is the water in the form of perennial rivers. The possible generation capacity of hydro-electric power is in the range of 15,000 to 20,000 megawatts. We have not even exploited 10% of this so far. Most of our projects are run off the river schemes without any storage. Due to low discharge of the rivers during winter the generation almost dries up. We have the ca-

pability of setting up a number of projects with sufficient storage to not only become self-sufficient in power but also to sell it to our neighbours who have tied our hands behind the back.

A very unfair treaty was concluded between these two countries in early sixties even without bothering to consult the local people. This has deprived Kashmiris of the use of their own water both for irrigation as well as power generation. No doubt Pakistan being a riparian state has some rights over the water of these rivers but the requirement of the Kashmiri people cannot be overlooked. India has already washed its hands by giving exclusive use of these rivers to Pakistan. The only possibility to retrieve this loss is a new agreement between Kashmiris and Pakistanis.

Next is the land. According to an estimate we have over a million hectares of irrigable land. Under the Indus Water Treaty we can irrigate seven hundred thousand hectares but in actual practice the total land being currently utilized for agriculture is not more than three hundred fifty thousand hectares. Kashmir has basically an agriculture based economy. More than 80% population is rural based whose main crop has always been paddy. A large portion of land which was earlier under rice cultivation has been converted into orchards. In addition a sizeable part of this irrigable land has been utilized for construction of dwelling houses all over the valley. Other types of activities related to agriculture are vegetable growing and floriculture. In both sectors we have extensive possibilities. Even now some areas in Kashmir are growing vegetables on a commercial scale for export to Delhi market. The Agriculture University in Srinagar has developed hybrid varieties of many vegetables and salads which are better than originals imported from Europe.

Not many people know that the University has been

able to grow Kiwi fruit of a better variety. India is importing Kiwi fruit from Italy and New Zealand through Dubai. The large numbers of pastures allow us to set up many dairies and mutton farms. However, at the present moment we are importing most of our mutton and dairy products. Except in rural areas one does not find local mutton in Srinagar or any other major towns. We have even forgotten the taste of local mutton and dairy products. The mutton presently imported is of the lowest grade as we have no choice.

In the food sector we have the possibility of trout fish. There are already a couple of commercial farms and one at Kokernag was set up with Danish assistance. We are producing about 110 tons per year. The production can be increased manifold if we would pay careful attention and take the enterprise seriously. We have plenty of clean mountain water of the right temperature and enough land to set up a dozen such farms. We have the capability to not only produce trout fish for own consumption but to export it to other countries in the neighbourhood. For Floriculture the sky is the limit. In fact given the right type of a post harvest infrastructure and a marketing organisation, Kashmir can supply cut flowers to all the countries in the Gulf region where it is normally imported from Europe.

A bye product of floriculture is perfumes as we have a large variety of herbs growing wild. These can be commercially cultivated and many perfumeries set up here. Some Dubai based firms are already exploring this possibility. Forests of Kashmir though virtually raped in last couple of decades are a great source of innumerable products.

First is the large amount of fallen wood in deep forests which rots because of our inability to extract it. We cut fresh trees near the roads instead of going deep into rich forests in remote areas where ropeways are used to extract already fallen wood. The herbs and medicinal plants abundantly

found in our forests can enable us to set up a number of pharmaceutical industries. The potential for industrial development has gotten very little attention from Kashmiris. Our climate is ideal for electronic industries of all types especially miniature electronics used in IT fields. The one sector which is touted about by almost every politician as the backbone of our economy is 'Tourism'. In fact their contention is not really true in the present scenario. At the present moment it is rather backbone of a political slogan of so called normalcy.

However, in real terms the Tourism Industry can be the priority industry of Kashmir provided there is total peace. The extensive varied potential for all seasons which we have can make Kashmir the most important year round destination for world tourism. The only requirement is 'Peace' and International Air Connectivity. This subject needs no elucidation and is globally known and acknowledged. Tourism is a larger foreign exchange earner than the export industry, which consists only of a few souvenirs and lots of happy memories.

Last but not the least we should not forget our human resource. Even at present we have over three hundred thousand educated unemployed. We have thousands of engineers, doctors, IT professionals and other technocrats sitting idle. Remittances of foreign workers to their home country constitute a big chunk in the economy of a country especially in developing countries. At one time wasn't Pakistan surviving primarily on foreign remittances? If we are able to arrange placement of our professionals worldwide, they will contribute to our economy. At the present moment we are under a total siege in this regard and the most difficult thing to get in Kashmir these days is a passport.

After having analyzed the economic possibilities in Kashmir, let us examine what we have achieved during last sixty years. The most illusive has been the generation of elec-

trical power. We have a real famine of this in spite of a massive generation potential. If only we had this sector fully functioning we could be economically independent. Thanks to our neighbouring countries, we have been completely deprived of this resource. Nothing can go ahead unless we are able to get abundant power. At the present moment we are crippled and totally enslaved in this regard.

Next is the self sufficiency in food. We have become totally dependent on all types of food imports over these past 60 years. A mere closure of the road sends panic signals every where. No doubt the population has significantly grown but the food production has been completely out paced. There has been a deliberate neglect on the part of all the players whether from the Government side or Private Sector in regard to industries connected with food production. People have been looking for a fast buck at any cost. No one has been sincere in developing Kashmiris economy on an independent footing. We have just created a huge army of Government Servants, almost half a million taking into account all sectors. It is reported that almost 75% of the plan funds given by the Central Government are utilized for paying the wages of the staff.

Another half a million people including three hundred thousand educated, are unemployed. The only thing which has grown in abundance in last 60 years is the soldiers and other security forces personnel of all hues and shades. They are every where and sometimes more numerous than the local population. The systematic and deliberate economic enslavement of Kashmiris over last half century is an important topic for research by the Economics Department of the University of Kashmir. It would be very useful if they could prepare a document with statistical details on the 'Economy of Kashmir from 1947 to 2007'. In the event there is already such a document, it needs to be made public so that all of us know the real facts.

31.

KASHMIR ON LIFE SUPPORT

In medical parlance when a patient is facing a life threatening situation, he is put on a life support system involving a ventilator, oxygen, and other life saving measures. The aim is to stabilize a person and maintain his vital signs. It is the most critical situation of extreme emergency. Sometimes a patient goes into a coma and has to be maintained on a life support system for years on end till he either wakes up and recovers or faces the ultimate end. The present set up in Kashmir in almost every sphere of life makes one wonder whether the entire valley has been put on a life support system by the Indian Government?

In a normal situation a healthy person has a natural growth and he develops into a perfect human being after receiving proper nourishment both physical and psychological. Similarly, other developmental activities take place in an orderly and standard fashion. This ensures that a proper infrastructure is developed to improve the quality of life for the citizens. In Kashmir the reverse is happening.

The quality of life of ordinary citizens has not only deteriorated but has become very sedentary and mechanical, totally devoid of finer social and human values.

People have become zombies maintained by some sort of an external life support system. Government keeps on issuing 'Medical Bulletins' that the situation is 'Normal' and the Kashmiri patient is being maintained in a 'Stable Condition'. People are just surviving.

The last two decades have completely transformed life in Kashmir. Although the situation seems normal, there is tension in the air. An abundance of security forces everywhere with their pill boxes, bunkers, and rolls upon rolls of barbed wire are now a part of the landscape of Kashmir. Local people have stopped taking notice of these. For them it is a normal routine. Only first time visitors are stunned by such a large presence of armed soldiers everywhere. The days of visiting friends and roaming around till mid-night are gone. People try to get back to their homes as early as possible unless they are compelled by unforeseen circumstances to stay out longer in the night.

There was a time when bride-grooms would return with their brides following a wedding sometime after mid-night and often in early morning but not now! Most of the social activities have been adversely affected and have almost ceased altogether especially in rural areas and more disturbed and sensitive urban areas. There are only two social events where people have an occasion to meet each other, the weddings, and the funerals.

Members of the elite are better off yet do still go to Golf Clubs and restaurants while the poor cannot afford it. The atmosphere of underlying continuous tension has weighed heavily on the general health of the people. The feeling of a total siege has given rise to many psychological disorders. The number of patients suffering from psychosomatic illnesses runs into hundreds of thousands. The extent of palpable tension can be judged only when a person comes to the valley after spending some time outside. As soon as one crosses the tunnel to enter the valley, a

totally new atmosphere is experienced and a strange feeling of depression sets in.

After spending some time in Jammu and then comparing the experience with the daily life in Srinagar one is struck by the stark difference. In Jammu one can move around throughout the night without any problem. All shopping centres do a brisk business and everything functions normally. The growth of the City during last two decades has been phenomenal. The overhead roads with flyovers, the wide main city roads with good drainage, the shopping malls, the new well planned housing colonies, and the flourishing industrial estates are turning Jammu into an important metro. Above everything else, the tension free calm atmosphere with the hustle and bustle makes one feel envious. The most tragic thing about daily life in Kashmir is a feeling that the Central Government has mentally given up on Kashmir.

This is evident from the lack of interest and enthusiasm manifested by different Central Authorities in implementing various projects and schemes in Kashmir. In the mid seventies, Indira Gandhi had made it a point that all projects are taken up on priority and continuous monitoring was done. Sheikh Abdullah had been brought around after a long spell of disenchantment with India. So it was essential to give a big boost to development activities. Almost all important dignitaries that visited Delhi would invariably land in Srinagar. People from both the State Government and Central Government worked with zeal and enthusiasm. Some of the landmark projects of that time are the Medical Institute, International Convention Centre, Air India Hotel, New Airport Terminal, Trout Fisheries farm in Kokarnag, HMT watch factory, and so on.

These important projects and others even had international start-up assistance. But the situation is quite opposite now. Most of the projects have deteriorated beyond redemp-

tion or have become defunct. For most new projects one does not find the same enthusiasm. A wide gulf has been created between the Central Authorities and the local people. There is a general feeling of dithering and indifference. A continuous drift seems to be going on in all developmental activities. The implementation takes place at a snail's pace. The attitude is, 'Kam Chalao'.

Firstly, there is a belief in Delhi that a sizeable chunk of the developmental funds is finding its way to militants. It is often quoted that Centre has pumped in Rs.24, 000 crores in last few years but on the ground one does not see the result of such a huge investment. It is not clearly stated that the bulk of these funds is on Central projects and security related expenses. Secondly, the extreme alienation probably makes Central Authorities ask whether it is worthwhile to invest here. Just take various consumer related services.

There is a marked difference between the functioning of these in Jammu and Srinagar, be it telephone, internet, mobile service, postal services, and some other similar services. As far as local civic services are concerned, these are totally missing or exist only in namesake. Dal Lake is classic example of dithering. The Central Government very well knows that the problem is beyond the scope of the local or even national agencies. It needs a global initiative in expertise, equipment, and funding for relocation of the population crowding and polluting the lake shores.

If the Central Government could take an initiative in the worst period of militancy to complete the prestigious power project in Uri through a Swedish Consortium, why not take a similar initiative to save Dal when things are much more normal? Merely pumping in money regardless of monitoring its end use will not solve the problem. It clearly shows that people are interested in just carrying on activities on the pattern of a life support system.

Doctors are selling clothes on Srinagar streets and pol-

ishing shoes. There are over four hundred thousand educated unemployed in Kashmir. They have no openings and are getting frustrated with each passing day. There has been no positive initiative to tackle this problem. Again there are fantastic suggestions of creating more and more battalions of Armed Police as if the existing forces are not enough. One would have thought that to give relief to the people from the harassment they have faced through armed personnel both in uniform or out of it, the Government would be thinking of peaceful civilian avenues. Unfortunately they continue to be in a security related phobia.

There is one sphere of activity in which both India and Pakistan have agreement to continue Kashmiris on a life support system and that is the pace of implementation of CBMs (Confidence Building Measures). Not more than 900 people have crossed the LOC in Srinagar-Muzzaffarebad sector after the start of the bus service with great fanfare. One would have expected by now more than few thousand people crossing daily. Same is the situation with Cross LOC trade. It has yet to start. Again the attitude is to give lip service to dramatic measures and then conveniently continue to dither. The easiest excuse to avoid any positive action is 'Militancy'. The simplest whipping boy! If the people at the helm in both countries are really interested in taking the 'Patient' off life support system, they have to do something before it is too late. Relief has to be provided on the ground level to ordinary Kashmiri in all aspects of his day to day life.

Delhi has committed umpteen blunders in Kashmir and brought the Kashmiri to a level where his survival depends upon emergency and temporary life support systems. Pakistanis have now started acting in the same fashion. Something has to be done urgently to save Kashmiris from this untold suffering. They must act fast. If they don't act now, it may be the last blunder for the both!

32.

KASHMIR SOLUTION, JINXED BY DISUNITY!

Every time an atmosphere of peace starts developing in the sub-continent which revives hope for the settlement of the most vexed problem of Kashmir, something terrible happens without any warning bringing us back to square one! There is no other explanation than the fact that this unfortunate land and its people are 'jinxed'. Different people advance different reasons for this misfortune of Kashmiris. Some say that Kashmir is the most beautiful place on this planet and is popularly called Paradise on Earth. The beauty of this land has been its undoing. Everyone wants to own it!

This rivalry among its neighbouring countries to somehow own this piece of God forsaken land has made the life of its people miserable. Others blame the people of this land themselves for all the mess surrounding them. It is said that the mass conversion of its inhabitants in the twelfth century has been their major sin for bringing all the suffering and misery on them. For thousands of years Kashmir had been a Hindu state with a glorious past. It was famous as a seat of learning throughout the world and some of the most important discourses on Hinduism and Buddhism have been held here.

The Trika School of Saivite philosophy of Hinduism originated from here. Similarly the Mahayana School of Buddhism was formulated here and spread to many countries. With the advent of Islam the majority of the people peacefully accepted Islam as their new religion through the selfless preaching of saints like Bulbul Shah and Shah-I-Hamadan. Almost the entire population except the ruling class of Brahmins converted to Islam. Some people surmise that the Brahmins are taking revenge for this move by their former fellow religionists which had made them paupers overnight from the Kings they had been for centuries. Had there been no mass conversion, Kashmir would have remained a Hindu state and would have been truly the befitting crown of the Hindu India.

The vast majority of Hindus in India are not still reconciled to the fact that Kashmir which was once a famous Hindu Kingdom is now a Muslim majority state. They always try to find some ancient connections from its history to keep this ancient land of the learned Brahmins and holy Sages with them at all costs. The only possible solution to overcome this handicap may be re-converting Kashmiri Muslims back to Hinduism!

In contrast to this theory, some others blame Kashmiri Muslims themselves and say that the Kashmiris did not in reality convert to Islam but adopted Islam to their traditional way of life. They continued with idol worship of a different kind and even now continue to maintain and practically follow a number of Hindu customs and rituals only changing their nomenclature and style. They are Muslims in rituals but not in faith. Had Kashmiris accepted Islam honestly and followed its precepts truly, they would not have landed in the mess in which they find themselves at present.

After centuries of subjugations, the Muslims of Kashmir had an opportunity for emancipation in 1947 but they disregarded God's command as conveyed in Holy

Quran. Verse 28 in Sura Al-I-Imran states, 'Let not the Believers take for friends or helpers Unbelievers rather than Believers: if any do that, in nothing will there be help from Allah, except by way of precaution, that ye may Guard yourselves from them. But Allah cautions you (To remember) Himself; for the final goal is to Allah'. Allah had given by his will a beautiful choice to the people. Not only did Kashmiris spurn the choice between Believers and Unbelievers which they had in 1947 but they continue to do so even now!

The school of thought propagating this action of the people to be the cause of Kashmiris misfortune have themselves failed to show the right way to achieve the ultimate goal. Nor have they set an example of faith for the people to follow. There is lot of preaching but no practical way forward. Notwithstanding these different view points and opinions about the cause of quagmire in which Kashmiris find themselves, one is constrained to admit that the primary cause for Kashmir getting jinxed and failing to find a solution to its problems is the disunity among its people. Kashmiri is fighting a Kashmiri. In every sphere of life and society one only witnesses Kashmiri versus Kashmiri. There is disunity among their leaders as well as their followers. Every organisation has (A) to (Z) factions.

For mainstream parties it does not matter as they have no stake except themselves and are there at the sweet will of somebody far away holding their strings. But for the parties claiming to lead a popular movement it is suicidal. If their goals are the same, then why do we have so many organisations and additional factions in those organisations? Is it really a 'Freedom Struggle' or it is a 'Power Struggle'? People behave in such a way as if they are about to take over the so called state government with its deceptive power! The people in the state government are not able to even displace a single soldier or even withdraw his unlimited powers. The

real power always resides somewhere else.

The disunity is further compounded by our tendency to look to outsiders for a solution not realizing that it is the outsiders who have been exploiting us for centuries. It is really pathetic that some of the outside politicians are pleading with and persuading Kashmiris to forge unity among them to strengthen their case for basic rights. It is rather humiliating. We have to look within for a solution and not be ridiculed by outsiders.

The internecine warfare has always plagued Kashmiris throughout their long chequered history. However, in those days it was war of succession in an independent sovereign state which happens in all nations. Now it is sheer infighting under external subjugation which is not only detrimental to the achieving of the goal but disastrous to the goal itself. It was a historic occasion when in early nineties all parties and groups struggling for Kashmir's freedom had come together under one umbrella of the Hurriyat Conference. The conglomerate had achieved global recognition as the sole representative organisation of Kashmiris.

Unfortunately, the unity did not last long. The agencies from both the countries worked overtime to ensure that the organisation not only split in the middle but broke up into over a dozen other groups. It was a victory for them but a disaster for Kashmiris. In fact, such things had been happening right from the start of the movement in 1931. Between the Muslim Conference and the National Conference there does not seem to be any disunity of purpose or for that matter, disunity of their followers but only a clash of egos between leaders. Every Kashmiri leader, young or old, wants to lead the movement independently. They do not believe in collective leadership. Every potential leader has his own shop selling his own brand of 'Azadi'.

May be it is in our psyche because of the long period of monarchical rule with its attendant palace intrigues which

we have undergone in the ancient past. We have an additional problem of jealousy in almost all facets of our life and are experts in pulling out rugs from under the feet of our rivals. There is only one solution to get over the jinx which is preventing our ultimate emancipation. We urgently need to have a single and clear goal instead of umpteen road maps with their individual solutions, and one organisation to lead us towards it.

Last but not the least; we do not need a single charismatic leader but collective leadership. The indications coming from both within the sub-continent and outside are that the problem of Kashmir has had enough run and needs now to be solved. It is a very crucial rather critical time for Kashmiris. A historical juncture achieved after decades of struggle and enormous sacrifices against the centuries of external subjugation.

If we do not understand the delicacy of the situation and come together, we may have to live in suffering and misery for a few centuries more and be cursed by our future generations!

33.

KASHMIR PROBLEM RESOLVED?

President Musharraf has categorically stated that the Kashmir Problem may be resolved sooner rather than later. According to him 'reasonable progress' has been made between the two rival claimants of the troubled State. There had earlier also been a strong rumour floating all over the place that India and Pakistan have reached some sort of an understanding through back channel diplomacy for the resolution of the decades old vexed problem of Kashmir. It was said that the approach to the ultimate solution already worked out is being gradually disclosed to the public on both sides in small instalments.

The rumour had been confirmed by no less a person than the Foreign Minister of Pakistan, Mr. Khurshid Ahmad Kasuri himself. According to him agreement has been reached and there are only minor glitches. He has also mentioned that it may not be the 'First Best' solution for all the three parties, India, Pakistan, and Kashmiris, but it is the 'Second Best'. It is also being speculated that the solution has been brokered by the United States of America. However, what the final solution actually is, no body knows!

The signals emanating from various politicians give a

rough indication of the approach proposed to be taken for working out a solution. First is the now most controversial and the most talked about, 'demilitarisation'. Politicians of all hues and shades and from all streams have been battering this word for last couple of months, precisely from the date of the TV interview of President Pervez Musharraf. In fact, the very next day after the interview speculations started. The mainstream Kashmiri leaders clung to the prop put up by President Musharraf. Rather than taking a cue from his interview, they gave their own interpretation.

Demilitarisation was supposed to mean re-location of troops from the populated areas and sending them back to barracks. Musharraf himself was not very clear about it. Self rule was given the interpretation of more autonomous governance without the over-riding intervention of the Central Government but within the constitution of India. However, some of the leaders of the popular movement gave their own explanation.

Demilitarisation was total withdrawal of the armed forces and not only from the civilian areas. They even specified a time for the beginning of the process. It was emphatically stated that the withdrawal will begin in three months. It was such a matter of fact statement that one felt the person issuing the same had been specifically told about it. Then came denials from the authorities on Indian side and it was termed mere speculation by no less a person than the Prime Minister himself. The Kashmiri leader's subsequent statement about accepting ad hoc governance till the final solution is achieved within 5 or 10 years also indicates his being in the circle of people knowing about this first approach to the solution.

It is said that one of the mainstream Kashmiri politicians also got a whiff of this agreed proposal and he hijacked it as his own agenda and raised a tremendous hype about it thereby forcing both sides to take him also

on board. It is also alleged that the Indian Government has second thoughts about the agreed proposal so in order to confuse and dilute it, they themselves asked the mainstream leader to raise the hype about demilitarisation but in a totally different context. Holding of the third Round Table Conference of only the mainstream leaders also betrays the Central Government thinking on these lines.

In addition some other mainstream leaders have also become vociferous about the violations of basic human rights of Kashmiris. They are all praise for the militant leaders on the other side whom they were continuously bombarding earlier. All these leaders must have smelt something which has forced them to come closer to the agenda propagated by leaders of Kashmiris Freedom Movement so as to get on the bandwagon. Till recently they were dismissing them as misled youth who had gone astray. Now they are claiming that without their participation Kashmir problem cannot be resolved. On the other hand some of the staunchest militant leaders who were not prepared for any contact with the India Government are welcoming opportunity for participating in a dialogue for peace.

There seems to be lot of back channel diplomacy going on and it has probably moved faster than the actual dialogue process. As already mentioned, one of the popular leaders went to the extent of being prepared to look at some ad hoc arrangement for governance for a period of five to ten years till a final solution was agreed upon. It sounds like testing the waters by releasing agreed plan in bits and pieces. However, one thing is definite that all are not on board with the plan. It has been reported that BJP has made it known to other side that they should not go for an agreement with the present government but should wait till they come back to power. Like Vajpayee, Dr. Manmohan Singh also wants to be part of history by piloting the solution of this most vexed problem which is prob-

ably the oldest one at the present moment.

While on one hand there is a tussle going on between political stalwarts for taking the credit for an ultimate solution, on the other hand there are plenty of vested interests putting all types of spokes in the wheel. The stakes for them are so high that they will go to any extent to sabotage the whole process. In the final analysis it is the grass which is getting trampled in all these processes.

The misery and suffering of Kashmiris who are facing the brunt is getting prolonged more and more. There is not a single day when two to three Kashmiri young men are not killed by militants belonging to one or the other organisation. The security agencies announce their names, designations, and organisations in such a matter of fact way as if they have been given a list of all such cadres by the concerned organisations in advance. It is like soldiers carrying their name and number tags around their necks in a real war!

If one believes that the Kashmir problem has been resolved between the two giants of the sub-continent behind the scenes, then it must also be admitted that Kashmiris are not a part of the solution. The way they are being eliminated, harassed, and subjected to the worst type of human rights violations without any one losing even an iota of sleep over such incidents on both the sides of the divide, clearly establishes that they do not count much in this high level agreement. The two sides are forced to accommodate them, being an unwanted nuisance but the accommodation is being attempted without disturbing the overall status quo.

It is a pity and, in fact, the extreme misfortune that Kashmiris have no advocates now to plead their case. Every body seems to have abandoned them. All said and done, if the problem is near resolution without fully taking into account the basic aspirations of Kashmiris, then whatever is the agreed solution, it will not last very long. After all the

sacrifices and the suffering they have gone through, Kashmiris may not be prepared to accept the 'Second Best' solution.

There is a new generation of Kashmiris, which has come of age in a situation of continuous conflict and has seen only violence and a brutal suppression by security forces. Moreover they are faced with a bleak economic future. They are hounded and harassed both within as well as outside Kashmir. Their number is at least three to four hundred thousand. Their patience is slowly reaching its end. It is they who need to be addressed first. It is they who can lead us all towards a solution. An important leader of these youth has recently warned that if the peace process is not accelerated, the next generation of Kashmiris would be only of Fidayeen (suicide squads).

It is a grave warning based on experienced assessments. He must have understood the frustrations of the restive youth. Syed Ali Shah Geelani's recent rally at the martyrs' graveyard is an indication of the feelings of the people. Whatever may be the final resolution or whenever it may come, there are some basic and urgent measures needed to give relief to the Kashmiris who have been for a long time now in the line of fire.

The first is freedom from soldiers, uniformed or otherwise. Second is an honest and efficient administration for running the day to day affairs of the state. Third is the absolute freedom for travel within the state to all parts on both sides of LOC, outside the state within India, Pakistan or abroad. And the final is the achievement of the 'Place of Honour and Dignity' promised to Kashmiris by umpteen leaders umpteen times. How the last goal will be reached and when, can be debated in an atmosphere of peace and tranquillity.

The vicious circle of violence has to end first and an era

of honest and credible development has to begin. That alone will show the way to resolve this tragic problem!

34.

GENESIS OF CORRUPTION

The most frequently used single word these days in every forum is 'Corruption'. It is said to have spread like cancer in the entire society. No part of our daily life is free of this most terrible malaise. People are feeling suffocated and helpless before this scourge which has eaten into the vitals of our society. Kashmir has been rated by 'Transparency International' as the second most corrupt state in India. Corruption is not confined to material areas only but has affected both the political values and the overall morality of society. We are faced with material, moral and political corruption. Why has Kashmir become such a corrupt place?

There is one main factor and that is the readiness of Kashmiris to compromise. Once a person strays from the truth and is prepared to say that 2 and 2 make 5, corruption starts. The origin of this compromise goes back centuries in our history. However, it has seen real culmination in last half century or so. It has been often observed by a number of historians that the timidity and deceitfulness of a Kashmiri is due to his unending suppression by outsiders. He has never had a chance to grow in a totally free and healthy atmosphere. It is natural for a human being to develop an instinct of survival when he is faced by forces bent upon

annihilating him.

For survival a person goes to any extent. For him morality, truthfulness, honesty, self-respect, and dignity lose all meaning. He has somehow to survive against all odds. Sir Walter Lawrence in *'Valley of Kashmir'* also talks about this misfortune of Kashmiris. According to him Kashmiris are not as bad as they are portrayed by outsiders. The main cause for their pitiable situation is the centuries of slavery. A couple of generations living in a free atmosphere will bring the best out of a Kashmiri. But they never got that chance and the slavery has continued in one or the other form. Compromise has become part of their daily life. This has been taught to them by their leaders.

The first compromise took place in 1938 when movement by the Kashmiri Muslims was compromised. It is well known that it was the Kashmiri Muslims who had been the sufferers under the autocratic rule of Dogras. Their leaders for reasons best known to them widened the movement to cover the entire Kashmir society on a secular basis with disastrous results for the Muslim community. The move had apparently been good as it had given a truly nationalist colour to Kashmir's Freedom Movement but the hidden agenda of some misled the Kashmir leadership.

The second compromise took place in 1947. Majority of Muslims were in favour of joining Pakistan because of emotional ties. There was a popular saying those days that one would be prepared to devote body and soul to India but one's heart was still with Pakistan. Kashmir's tallest leader, instead of truly guiding people and against popular feelings, chose the other path, again with disastrous results. People had blind faith in the sincerity of the leader and followed him in spite of his political somersaults. Had he been truly nationalist and taken the third option right from the start, the things would have been different. He did realise his mistake after sometime but then it was too late.

People would have forgiven him but his own lieutenant Bakshi stabbed him in the back. He opened the flood gates to corruption.

A systematic campaign for character assassination was unleashed on Kashmiris. Money and muscle power were freely used to buy temporary loyalty of the masses. Spiritual and intellectual pursuits were replaced by material gains. Betrayal was rewarded and loyalty to principles was punished. Orwellian new speak was introduced and truth was banished. People were 'disciplined' through the newly constituted 'Peace Brigade'. It was Goebbels in action. A masterly use of carrot and stick!

The 11 year long concerted campaign at destroying Kashmiri character was so successful that even the leaders of conviction incarcerated in different jails started doubting their own beliefs. Corruption was so much ingrained into the psyche of Kashmir that it was taken to be a normal way of life. This is usual in all occupied lands. The occupiers have to set up a local system of administration to continue their hold. Because of the basic conflict, upright and honest people do not side with the outsiders. It is always people with weakness of character that are moulded to serve the external masters.

The downslide into the pit of corruption which started from the time of Bakshi has reached the lowest possible limits. There does not appear any chance of coming out of the pit! Repeated declarations, slogans, and promises by top politicians to remove the scourge of corruption sound hollow in the face of the actual ground situation. Right from the traffic constable on the road side up to the top political bosses, the whole system is seeped in corruption. Bribes are not only gladly taken but also given without any hesitation or remorse.

It has become a well established routine for getting anything done in every government establishment or organisation. In some departments, the corruption has been institutionalized and it is taken to be part of the normal procedure. No one feels anything bad about it. Rather it is taken to be rightful cut of all concerned. The typical example is within engineering departments. The percentage cut from each contract from the level of a junior engineer to chief engineer is fixed. There is no dispute about it.

However, in certain cases the corruption exceeds beyond this basic ingrained cut. This involves variations in the quantity and the quality of materials used. Extension and expansion of the original contracts and in some cases drawl of bills for non-existent works mutually shared by all. Paying of huge bribes through intermediaries for posting, transfer, and appointments at the administrative level as well as the ministerial level has been thoroughly debated during the last assembly session which witnessed the sacking of a senior minister.

Apart from material corruption, there is exponentially growing 'moral' corruption involving all sections of the society. Every second day one witnesses skeletons falling out of the moral cupboard. The second rank in corruption given to the state by the transparency international must be now higher than even the first rank. Can this corruption which has eaten into the vitals of Kashmir society be ever eradicated? The blood will have to be drained out and purified by a dialysis machine. Even then it can only be prevented from recurring if the top is clean. Honesty like water flows from the top downwards. Unless we have the top honest and clean and that too with a political will, nothing will succeed.

Moreover, as highlighted above, the top has to be uncompromising. An honest top rung will not tolerate a corrupt bottom. If one claims to be honest but expresses

helplessness because of the people around or under him and still carries on, that constitutes the first compromise. It is said that a reasonable man adopts himself to the ways of the world.

However, an unreasonable man tries to adopt the world to his way of thinking. Therefore, all the progress in the world depends upon the unreasonable man! In the present context an uncompromising, honest, and upright leader with courage of conviction and a political will to stand by the truth is an unreasonable man. To refuse compromise involves sacrifice and suffering. Is anyone prepared for that?

This is precisely what Kashmir has been waiting for. Will we ever get such a leader? God alone knows! Till the time that happens, the corruption is not going to go away. It will rather go on multiplying and eating into the vitals of our society.

35.

KASHMIR'S SELLERS AND RESELLERS

Sometime back there was lot of hue and cry about the proposed sale of land for development of tourism infrastructure in Kashmir. Almost all parties professing totally different ideologies and even diametrically opposite ones, raised their voices against this proposal which itself had been messed up by the authorities. The intention had only been to set up world class infrastructure of various tourism facilities to cater for the up-scale tourist market expected to visit Kashmir.

No body at that time dared to speak the truth that in real terms the land is not in the actual possessions of the locals. On papers we may hold the de jure possession but in de facto terms it is possessed by those who have the over riding authority on all things in Kashmir. They can take possession of any piece of land in the name of security whenever and where ever they like. All protests by locals go unheeded.

In most locations they have been sitting on the prime land for decades and even now take over similar tracts of land not withstanding local resistance. There has never been any consistent protest from the local leaders on this subject. However, the most tragic part of the story is that the

Kashmiris and their land have been sold and resold umpteen times by the so called leaders of all streams. They have always been treated as dumb driven cattle or a flock of sheep herded by different shepherds in one or the other directions without any compunction or remorse.

The worst aspect of the tragedy is that some young mainstream leaders are going across the border to solicit new customers for selling Kashmiris. Their parents and in some cases their grand parents have been selling and reselling Kashmiris to buyers on this side of the border for more than half a century. Now the progeny of these leaders acting as sales persons have travelled across to find new buyers on the other side. There cannot be something more ironic and pathetic in the history of a nation.

This sale and resale of Kashmiris who have been made to look like a saleable commodity reminds one of the marketing of products undertaken at present by multinational companies. To market their products, they usually have authorised dealers and sellers and resellers. Similarly for the sale of Kashmiris we have had authorised dealers and sellers and resellers. All through these last 60 years or so we had persons who have been claiming to be the authorised representatives of the people. They first sold us to one buyer and then backed out of the deal as the price finally offered did not satisfy their ego. Then after a prolonged period of incarceration, they again struck a new deal. This time they settled for a much lower price and sold their people into perpetual slavery.

The progeny of these leaders has now started looking for newer markets and have assumed the role of resellers of the most battered and bartered commodity in the history, the dumb driven people of Kashmir! Unfortunately, due to reasons best known to them, the present so called 'authorised dealers' did not go there to contest the

deal. Wisdom demands contesting auctions and not running away from these. One fails to understand what makes Kashmiris such a wretched commodity that every one who has a chance sells them for a pittance.

Is it because of centuries of external subjugation which has ingrained in them a philosophy of survival against all odds? Is it because the people have become totally materialistic and have lost all sense of self-respect and dignity? Is it because the moral fabric of the society has been so much battered that there is no sense of fair play and justice?

History is a witness to the fact that we have ourselves invited our oppressors. Right from Mughal times it has been Kashmiris themselves who have gone out to bring in outsiders to rule over them. A delegation of Kashmiri Sunni nobles led by Sheikh Yaqub Sarfi invited Akbar to Kashmir to rid them from the persecution of Shia Chaks. In Afghan period Pandit Birbal Dhar went to Sikhs to rid Kashmiris from the tyranny of Kabul Governors. However, the first sale of this ever saleable commodity without their consent in the recent history was undertaken by the British who sold them to Dogras for few thousand pounds sterling. They were sold lock, stock, and barrel. It was like a pasture being sold along with the sheep that were grazing therein.

Since that time Kashmir has seen many upheavals and uprisings. People have repeatedly tried to assert themselves and break the shackles of bondage. However, every uprising has thrown up a new leadership which has invariably compromised after leading the masses for a short stretch. They have always been changing horses mid-stream and leaving the people in the lurch more battered and confused than ever. In spite of the dawn of so called modern civilisation and the digital scientific age of the twenty first century, the mentality of selling the land along with the people has not changed. At present there is total confusion all around. No one is clear about the ultimate goal.

Four point formula, self-rule, autonomy, total independence, joint control and a host of other propositions and solutions are among a myriad of solutions propagated by a myriad of leaders. However, the basic premise of sincerity in alleviating the sufferings of the people and presenting a practical and viable solution is missing. What does a common Kashmiri look for as the most viable and urgent solution?

Firstly, release from violence from all sides. People want peace. They have seen enough of bloodshed. A complete generation has been wiped out. There is only one path forward to bring peace. All violence from both sides must end. This can happen only when both sides are sincere about it. Draconian legislations have to be withdrawn and soldiers sent back to barracks. Civilian face of the administration has to be restored. The administration itself has to be overhauled to make it fully representative, honest, fully accountable, and people friendly. The basic facilities of life have to be made available by ensuring good governance. All political prisoners need to be freed from the jails within the state and outside.

The other side too has to cease all acts of violence both against security forces and in civilian areas. Movement of people within the state and across has to be made easy without any cumbersome procedures. In brief, an atmosphere of trust has to be created all around. Above all else, the politicians from all sides have to summon the political will to take some momentous decisions. They will have to face stiff resistance, not from common people but the vested interests. The situation of continuous conflict has created many vested interests that benefit from uncertainty. They would never like peace to return. Peace for them sounds the death knell.

Talking of vested interests, one is reminded of a poster issued by Lockheed, the famous armament company of

USA which said, 'Peace in the world means lesser jobs for Americans!' Similarly, peace in Kashmir means closure of many 'shops' on the sub-continent and even beyond. It means end of the dealerships, cancellation of sellers, and resellers' licenses. Release of billions of rupees blocked in defence deals on two sides for poverty alleviation and social uplift.

This can only be done if the younger generations on both sides take a break from the past and come together. Kashmir needs a new generation of young leaders to come forward for the emancipation and salvation of the common masses. A generation which has seen the worst face of the tyranny. A generation which will not barter the blood of martyrs. A generation which sincerely and honestly wants to give Kashmiris a place of honour and dignity! The days of chameleon sellers and resellers are past now!

36.

KASHMIRIS DUMPED AGAIN!

"Relations between India and Pakistan should not be held hostage to the Kashmir issue. The two countries can wait for future generations to resolve the dispute in a mature manner in an atmosphere of trust". Thus spoke Asif Zardari, popularly known as Mr.10%. A Kashmiri would like to ask, 'Why India and Pakistan have held Kashmiris hostage for last 60 years?' He further said, 'The idea is that we feel for Kashmir, the PPP (Pakistan People's Party) has always felt for Kashmir. We have a strong Kashmir policy. We have always had one'.

Mark his words. The feeling is for Kashmir and not Kashmiris. It has been claimed to be jugular vein only because of its strategic location. No body has ever bothered about the well being of Kashmiris. Both sides have been fighting for Kashmir and not for Kashmiris.

For 60 long years Kashmiris have been virtually prostituted. They have been wantonly used without any sense of remorse at all, as guinea pigs in a laboratory to test the two theories-the 'Two Nation Theory' and 'Secularism'. Kashmiris have been very convenient tools for the two sides to settle their scores.

After the partition of the sub-continent, India has been considered by the majority of Kashmiris, at least by the Muslims, as an enemy from day one. It sided with the Maharaja against whose autocratic rule they had risen. However, for some unknown reasons they blindly trusted Pakistan as their friend and saviour. Unfortunately, they have repeatedly been betrayed and dumped on the roadside. There is a wise saying that a strong enemy is better than a deceptive friend! The betrayal has been from the very start and continuous.

In 1947, if Pakistan had not sent the raiders into Kashmir, the situation would have been totally different. Maybe Kashmir would have become an independent country. Had the rulers on the other side been sincere about Kashmiris, they would have made 'Azad' Kashmir a full fledged independent country with some military treaty for its defence. It could have been made a member of United Nations like Bhutan. But they did not do it.

Then again they repeated the same story in 1965 but in a more organised fashion. The aim was to capture Kashmir and not give freedom to Kashmiris. Once again they failed. Then in 1971 after losing half of their country, they decided to dump Kashmiris but in a very tactful way. The ceasefire line became the line of actual control, which was probably intended to become a permanent border over a period of time.

Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto forgot that he had pledged a thousand year war to free Kashmiris. He wanted his prisoners back at any cost. Slowly Kashmiri youth realised that they had to be on their own. A nationalist movement rose for a totally independent Kashmir in 1990. It was Kashmiri nationalism at its peak. Yet again it was hijacked. India did not have to fight the nationalists. They were liquidated one by one, by the other side. Over forty thousand Kashmiris (according to Indian Government figures) lost their lives. Thou-

sands were injured and maimed. Women in hundreds were raped and molested. After letting Kashmiris suffer all these calamities, the rulers on the other side (coming from the elite feudal and tribal families) realised that it was not worth fighting India for Kashmir.

They let Kashmiris fend for themselves and offered an escape for India, a four point formula to ensure joint slavery of Kashmiris for future generations. A virtual political polyandry! The betrayal has seen its culmination in the declarations of the would-be rulers (it is still unclear as to who is going to be the ultimate ruler). A pledge is being given to India for crude and brazen dumping of Kashmiris by the roadside.

The worst ever experiences have been faced by Kashmiris in the last sixty years. Their fate is to be decided by the future generations in the sub-continent. Mr. 10% may be right in one aspect. His generation on both sides carries the burden and guilt of partition. They may not be able to take an objective decision. If that be so, then it is a welcome statement and a pointer to Kashmiris to be on their own! There has always been a dichotomy between the rulers and the ruled on the other side of the border. The rulers have all the time thought about their own gains, political as well as material. The people have been emotionally attached with the issue. Again these emotions have been channelled by their rulers for settling their own scores rather than helping the suffering and subjugated people.

The tragedy of the entire episode is that the so called leaders of the affected people have refused to accept the real truth. They have always looked to outsiders for their salvation. As usual they are again looking for outside intervention and have still not drawn a lesson from their history. One would have thought that the latest episode would have shaken people out of their slumber and made them realise that it is time to rethink and stand on one's own. It is

said that God has not changed the destiny of any people who have not had the urge to change it themselves.

Unfortunately, Kashmiris movements have been commercial enterprises instead of political movements. At present the commercial angle has been perfected on all sides with outside investments. Strangely, the strongest response to the comments of Pakistani leaders about dumping Kashmiris has come from some mainstream leaders than those claiming to represent the aspirations of the Kashmiri people! History gives every nation a chance to redeem itself. If it does so, it comes into the comity of nations. If it fails, it is consigned to the pages of history. Kashmiris are presently standing on the cross roads of history. They have to rethink and rethink fast about their future and that too in a realistic and a practical way.

What is the present status? Corruption is in the blood. Morality is at its lowest. Materialism is at the peak. A sizeable number is uprooted from their ancestral moorings and scattered all over the world. Their very identity is threatened. What is the image of a Kashmiris being projected to the world? Firstly, as an Islamic Terrorist bent upon destroying the world. Then as a corrupt, immoral, and an undependable person ready to sell his soul for a few pieces of silver. A motley crowd falling over each other for worldly gains. Is this crowd representative of all Kashmiris or is it a usual fringe seen in all societies? On that depends the fate of Kashmir? One hopes it is the fringe only and the bulk is still uncorrupted but paralyzed due to external causes. One may not go by the comments

Of the leaders from across the border. They are themselves with questionable Credibility. Their reputation of mortgaging their country for monetary gains is well documented. They are not known to be righteous and upright.

In spite of that, Kashmiris future looks dark and

uncertain unless we rethink and stand for ourselves. Emotions and violence are not going to solve the problem. These will rather compound it by giving others a chance of exploitation. Cool and rational thinking on practical lines with honesty of purpose may help us find a viable solution. Honour, self-respect, and dignity have meaning only when we have the faith in our beliefs and courage of conviction to stand by these. Let us begin by speaking the truth and standing by it regardless of the consequences. If we have the courage to do that the problem will solve itself!

37.

INCONVENIENT 'POPULAR' LEADERS

In the entire sub-continent we often use the term 'Popular' leaders to describe politicians who are supposed to be beloved of the common masses. It is used quite frequently to describe politicians of all hues and shades by the media, as well as by the common people themselves. However, over last few decades the leaders seem to have become so popular that they have to be protected from the very people whom they are supposed to represent. This protection has gone rather a bit too far and the very presence of these leaders causes great inconvenience to the common people. Leaders instead of being really 'Popular' have rather become 'Inconvenient' for the general masses.

In earlier times the leaders were always one with the masses. They would mingle freely and people could approach them any where. Mahatma Gandhi led long marches and was always among common people. Both Jawahar Lal Nehru and Mohammad Ali Jinnah moved with the masses. There was hardly any requirement of security and protection which we are seeing today. Even in Kashmir Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, the tallest Kashmiri leader of modern times was one with the people. He was easily accessible whether in power or out of power.

The present brand of so called 'Popular' leaders is totally insulated from the common masses. There is a total security phobia and scare about their well being. Everything is being followed strictly as per the 'Blue' book. Peoples' leaders seem to have become too distant from them. They have rather become a great inconvenience in day to day life! This is true all over the sub-continent. All leaders are categorized in terms of threat perception and equivalent security is provided, the maximum being Z-Plus. The security set up is so elaborate and extensive that one really gets annoyed and inconvenienced. The most maddening is the VVIP security given to the democratic rulers.

Firstly, their residences are like forts surrounded by high walls topped with rolls of barbed wire, sometimes electrified. The walls are dotted with pill boxes where soldiers stand on twenty four hour guard with machine guns. Entrances to these residences are through drop gates and numerous check points with metal detectors. Security checks, body-searches, and frisking are a routine which common people as well as government officials have to undergo. The occupants of these VIP residences are virtual prisoners. They cannot just walk out casually at their sweet will but coming in and going out involves a complete security drill. Travelling is a cumbersome and meticulous exercise. The Chief Minister travels with more than a dozen vehicles. First of all the route has to be sanitized. The cavalcade is led by jeeps with blaring sirens and traffic from the opposite direction and side roads are blocked. There are three to four similar bullet proof cars and one does not know in which vehicle the VIP is sitting. These are accompanied by a car carrying the electronic jammer to jam all remote control devices. The jammer costs anything between crore and a half to three crores. Finally comes the ambulance with doctor and other life saving facilities. Every movement of the VIP throws traffic in a tizzy. It may have been better if the VIP shuttles within the city also in a helicopter. It would save

people lot of inconvenience and harassment. Once I saw on a bridge a flock of sheep huddled by security men. They were posing a security threat and could not be allowed to move unless the VIP had crossed.

The security for the Prime Minister is a few steps ahead of this. He has Special Protection Group (SPG), an elite group of commandos equipped with sophisticated gadgetry guarding him all the time. Major General V K Singh in his book *'India's External Intelligence'* mentions, "After the assassination of Indira Gandhi, the SPG was raised to protect the Prime Minister. Like the Secret Service in the USA, the SPG is expected to protect the life of the Chief Executive. However, it was never intended that it should be done by causing hardships to general public. Roads are closed for long periods, leading to traffic jams. People miss flights and trains, and seriously ill patients cannot reach the hospital in time. Often, the airport itself is closed, and the flights are diverted to other stations, causing great inconvenience to everyone. The SPG treats common citizens like cattle, and we put up with it! Why should we? Is the life of one person more important than that of the critically ill patient being rushed to hospital?"

The SPG has a carte blanche in its functioning and calls shots in all matters concerning security and it has no limits on its expenditure. The same group is now also giving cover to some other VIPs in different parts of India. The arrangements for the travel of General Musharraf on the other side of the border are still more cumbersome. In his case, almost two to three cavalcades leave at one and the same time and no one is sure in which one is he travelling. He has had a number of suicide attacks and once had a narrow escape. The funniest part is when these leaders address public meetings. The public has to be segregated at a safe distance behind a fence. The leader addresses the public from behind a bullet proof screen. Bouquets and garlands are totally pro-

hibited. Free mingling with the people is out of question. However, many a times the leaders get frustrated and break the cordon to be one with the masses. This gives a nightmare to the security bosses.

The worst nightmare is when a VIP visits a private house. There is an elaborate drill for sanitizing the place in advance. The visit culminates into virtual security raid on the house and the inmates are glad when the VIP leaves and they heave a sigh of great relief.

All this security hassle has been prompted by the terrorism which has spread like an epidemic universally. The most frightening being the suicide bomber. There is no defence in any of the security drills against a person who has made up his mind to kill himself. This threat has raised security concerns all over the world and security personnel have to go to extreme lengths to safeguard political leaders and other important public figures.

However, in some of the developed countries they mostly depend on an efficient intelligence apparatus which is most of the time able to gather advance intelligence. Moreover, the security is very unobtrusive and clandestine. People at large are hardly able to notice and pin point it. On the contrary our people depend on visible human shield approach and in this regard they have taken the drill of obtrusive security a bit too far. In fact, the personal security has acquired a snobbish value. Now every Tom, Dick, and Harry has a pso (personal security officer). Even the persons who have taken part in the past elections but lost have security officers. Some retired bureaucrats also continue to have security at their residences and also keep personal security officers.

The height of irony is that some of the pro-freedom leaders too have government security! In a number of cases these security officers undertake many domestic chores rather than security tasks. This entire business of security entails mas-

sive expenditure running into hundreds of cores. In earlier times the authoritarian communist regimes were notorious for their security apparatuses.

However, these days the security set ups in the democratic countries are more powerful and elaborate. They override all other considerations in the name of security and the highest priority goes to what is termed as 'National Security'.

With all this security paraphernalia and the accompanying phobia, one wonders whether our present leaders can still call themselves 'Popular' leaders. They cause more of an inconvenience to common people and one could do without them especially on the roads.

38.

SUSPECTING KASHMIRIS UNIVERSALLY

According to a TV report, the Home Ministry has issued a circular to the Chief Minister's security that even Cabinet Ministers and senior bureaucrats accompanying the CM should be frisked. This has been prompted by a suspected mole in CM's security. This is the ultimate result of the security phobia which has engulfed Kashmir for last couple of decades. During this period the Kashmir issue has come into main focus everywhere. In fact, it has come to be known as the 'Nuclear Flashpoint' and South Asia's 'Hot Spot'. Even though there is a universal feeling that for establishment of peace in the Sub-Continent as well as in South Asia it is essential to resolve this dispute, yet the solution of the problem remains elusive.

While on one hand Kashmir has become a brand easily understood everywhere even though in the wrong context, on the other hand a Kashmiri has become a suspect universally. This is especially true of Kashmiri Muslims and includes even the Ministers and senior bureaucrats. The suspicion is not restricted to Kashmiris in Kashmir only. Inside Kashmir, within the sub-continent, and even abroad a Kashmiri Muslim is a suspect. There are umpteen instances of Kashmiris being suspected regardless of sta-

tus, position, or even location.

In Kashmir itself, every Kashmiri has to be cleared regarding his antecedents whether he applies for a passport, a job, or for taking part in any other normal activity. The verification of antecedents takes ages as the procedure involves getting clearance from a host of local and central agencies. There are cases where people have applied for a passport almost couple of years back, yet the status on the website of the passport office says, 'Police Report Awaited'. In any other part of India, a certificate issued by an officer of the central government of the rank of a deputy secretary or above entitles you to a passport without any police verification. Not in Kashmir where even the antecedents of minors have to be verified.

The height of security phobia is that instead of the normal 2 year verification of the residential address, in case of Kashmiris the Intelligence Department is required to verify the residential status for last 20 years because of the militancy problems which erupted in 1990.

Similar is the situation for appointment in government service. The antecedents have to be verified and a no objection certificate obtained before a person selected for a government job can be appointed. The procedure is now well established and no one objects to it. People are used to such harassment as normal routine. Apart from being a most annoying and distressing procedure for a potential employee or a passport holder, the exercise has many avenues for corruption. The procedure can be accelerated at different levels by bribing the field agents who ultimately are of the level of a constable or so. In fact, in a number of cases they expect gratification to push the matters up. In case it is not given, they are capable of complicating the matters to such an extent that even the highest authorities fail to mend these.

It has been observed that in a number of cases when

adverse reports come up from the lower levels for whatever reasons, the higher authorities do not want to take any responsibility to either investigate these fully or take a contrary decision even after having known the real facts. The worst case scenario is when the concerned person has any link whatsoever in his whole dynasty with militants or 'anti-national' elements on this or the other side of the border.

This also applies to people planning to go on a Hajj pilgrimage. It was only after personal intervention of Chief Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad that 300 prospective Hajj pilgrims, who had been held back due to 'adverse reports', were allowed to proceed last year. One would have liked the Chief Minister to intervene more often but it is doubtful whether he is in a position to do so. He too may become a suspect if he intervenes too often!

The same procedure applies for giving a no objection certificate on an Indian visa to visit Kashmir relatives in Pakistan or Pakistan Administered Kashmir. This has to be additionally cleared by the Central Intelligence Bureau and Research and Analysis Wing. As regards Kashmiris in different parts of India, the same suspicion prevails. They are considered to be potential terrorists. The usual procedure is to consider every Kashmiri young man to be a member of Lashkar-i- Tayyaba or some similar outfit unless he is able to prove otherwise. At all times they are required to carry identity cards and those who go to different tourist areas such as Goa, Kerala and so on for selling the handicraft items, they have to register with the local police.

The surveillance of Kashmiris gets extremely heightened during Independence Day and Republic Day. This is especially so in the national capital of Delhi. During those days it is almost impossible for a Kashmiri to get accommodations in any hotel or guest house. In fact, the scare is so much that even senior government functionaries are not

trusted and they have to prove their antecedents before they can get some accommodations.

The worst affected in regard to verification, especially on these particular occasions, as also in case of some unforeseen incidents are the Kashmiri students studying all over India. Every event generating tension puts them in a precarious situation regarding their well being and their parents and relations in Kashmir undergo nightmares till the tense situation blows over.

Now let us consider the plight of Kashmiris abroad. Their worst nightmare is trying to get an Indian passport renewed or a fresh one issued. Normally the Indian missions are required to refer the issue or renewal of a passport to an Indian national to the concerned regional passport officer for confirmation of the earlier issue of passport. However, in case of all Kashmiris under the instructions of the Union Home Ministry, the antecedents have to be got verified by the Home Department in Jammu & Kashmir. The procedure is very lengthy and cumbersome and sometimes takes years.

According to information received from some Kashmiris abroad, their cases have been pending clearance for years and they are issued fresh passports with only one year's validity by the concerned missions. The full validity passport can only be issued after receipt of clearance from Kashmir Home Department. This sometimes creates an anomalous situation as usually permanent resident visas and working permits are issued by foreign companies as well as governments for three years or so. The funny part of the story is that the reports sent by the State Home Ministry state, 'Nothing adverse has been reported' against the said person.

One wonders how the Intelligence Department comes to this conclusion when the concerned person has been away from Kashmir for years altogether! This is a rou-

tine which has got stuck in the bureaucracy for years now and is the biggest annoyance and harassment to Kashmiris working abroad. It might have been better for the government to prepare a black list of the unwanted persons and have the same circulated to all concerned. The list could be periodically up dated. This would save lot of time, money, and above all the hassles which Kashmiris face at present.

It is often given out that the Kashmiris are highly alienated. One cannot get the alienation lessened unless these small irritants are removed. In addition to the problems faced by Kashmiris with the State as well as Central Government, they continue to be on the adverse radar of many foreign governments. This becomes evident when a Kashmiri applies for a visa to USA or UK or some other countries.

It is reported that some foreign governments have issued instructions to their missions to doubly scrutinize the details of applicants from Kashmir. This is the result of non-stop media hype about cross border terrorism in Kashmir. It is normal for various governments to get suspicious about the antecedents of Kashmiris when their own home country doubts them. This unfortunate attribute of Kashmiris is bound to continue as long as the situation of uncertainty prevails.

There is only one escape from this harassment and that is to end the uncertainty. This does not seem probable in the very near future. Pending this it would greatly help if the concerned authorities could streamline some of their verification procedures. In the present digital age with pupil scanning, finger print reading, and face recognition it should not be difficult to achieve. Only someone at the top needs the political will to do it.

Unfortunately this attribute seems in short supply in our part of the world. Our political leaders themselves have become prisoners of an all powerful security grid and can-

not even visit a loo without their clearance. No body from any quarter, whether from the mainstream side or otherwise, speaks out about these basic day to day problems faced by common people. Ultimately, one can only exclaim, 'God help poor Kashmiris!' as they are not ready to help themselves.

39.

BUD SHAH NOT JAHANGIR!

Chief Minister Azad has seemingly carved out a niche for himself in the history of Kashmir. With his love for tulips bordering on an obsession, he has created Asia's largest Tulip 'Garden' and is now aiming for the biggest garden in the world leaving Holland, the home of Tulips, far behind. His love for Tulips and his untiring efforts in achieving his dream deserve appreciation. He can rightly claim that in size and the variety of flowers in his garden, he has even exceeded the famous Emperor Jahangir. However, it is debatable whether it is a garden or a farm. In essence it is massive expansion of the Siraj-i-Bagh seed farm of the Floriculture Department.

However, one would not like to belittle his efforts in creating a newest tourist attraction in Kashmir. Mughal Kings who came from Delhi to rule Kashmir had also the obsession of setting up of gardens and constructing palaces for their pleasure. They always treated Kashmir as their pleasure garden where they would escape from the scorching summer heat of the Indian plains. Mughals were fond of natural beauty and it is they who called Kashmir the 'Paradise on Earth'.

In almost all scenic locations they set up gardens and constructed lodges for rest. While on one hand they enhanced the beauty of the valley by setting up these facilities, on the other they slowly drained out the entire chivalry from the Kashmiri nation and converted us into docile followers. Azad too came from Delhi to rule over Kashmir. Even though his ancestors are from Kashmir, yet he has been away from here for a long time. However, his absence from the beautiful valley has not diminished his love for its enchanting landscape and unique environment.

Unfortunately, during all these years of absence and especially in last two decades, the environment of the valley has received tremendous battering and is crying for a redeemer. It is ironical that the world famous lake on the banks of which this tulip garden has come up is in last stages of extinction. Its major portion has turned into a stinking marsh. The material greed of the people has made them virtually eat away the lake piece by piece. Whatever is left is in an extremely bad state. It is decaying at such an abnormally fast pace that in a matter of years it may be gone for ever! Not only is Dal Lake the heart of Srinagar, the ancient 'City of the Sun', in trouble but the entire capital of Kashmir is in shambles. It is probably the dirtiest city in this part of the world.

Water bodies are choked and teeming with filth. River Jhelum is in no better condition. Roads are full of ruts and ditches. Garbage especially plastic bags are choking every drain, open space, and by lanes. Encroachments have squeezed roads thereby creating congestion on every road. There is a total break down of civic amenities and civic rules are conspicuous by their absence. Kashmir was in a similar situation almost six centuries back when Zain-ul-Abidin, popularly known as Bud Shah ascended the throne. The administration had broken down. Corruption was at its peak and there was no semblance of any law and order.

Criminals were ruling the roost.

The first and foremost task for him was to bring some order to chaotic conditions. For this he motivated the old class of officials, the Pandits, who had migrated during the reign of his father, to return to Kashmir giving them every facility and guaranteeing them religious and civil liberties. The King severely dealt with all corrupt officials to ensure corruption was completely rooted out. He dealt ruthlessly with all types of crime and most of the known criminals were put behind bars. Realizing that unemployment and poverty resulted in commission of crime, he took a number of steps so that suitable employment was guaranteed to all eligible persons in different fields.

Bud Shah was a great builder and built not only bridges, paved roads, and canals but established universities and colleges throughout the valley. One of the greatest contributions of Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin was in the field of arts and crafts. After ascending the throne, he invited a large number of competent teachers and craftsmen from Samarkand to train his subjects in these arts. Some of the handicrafts introduced include carpet weaving, paper mache, silk, paper making etc. Kashmiri artisans improved and perfected these arts to such a level that their fame spread to whole Asia and even to Europe.

Azad too could have followed in his foot steps and taken decisive steps to take Kashmir out of the morass in which it has fallen. Had he the political will and the courage of conviction, he could have taken the momentous decision of handing over the entire restoration and conservation project of Dal Lake to some International Agency. Posterity would carve his name in golden letters for such an effort. He has been visiting Tulip Garden almost every alternate week but how many times has he visited the stinking portions of Dal?

While taking a shikara ride to new Badamwari he had a minor feel of the dying Dal. Similar is the condition of the roads and other civic facilities in the capital city. A number of facilities created at a huge cost have similar utility as the life of Tulips, fifteen days to a month. Hajj House, a very welcome facility but it has a utility of only a month or so. The Assembly Complex, a project nearing completion at a huge cost but the utility during present situation is not more than 10 days or so in a year.

Compared to this, the Chief Minister has taken some very welcome steps in upgrading infrastructure in Jammu. The roads are being widened to international standards. There are a number of bridges planned to reduce congestion and ensure free flow of traffic. Even now the mesh of fly-overs and over head roads gives traffic free flow in and around the city. New water supply scheme has been commissioned. One of the greatest contributions of Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin was in the field of arts and crafts. After ascending the throne, he invited a large number of competent teachers and craftsmen from Samarkand to teach his subjects these arts. Some of the handicrafts introduced include carpet weaving, paper mache, silk, paper making etc. Kashmiri artisans improved and perfected these arts to such a level that their fame spread across Asia and even to Europe.

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One wonders why people always think of Kashmir as a pleasure resort for tourists and forget that there are millions of people who live there? As the popular verse goes, 'Narcissus cries for thousands of years on its blindness and it is with great difficulty that a man with vision is born in the garden!' (Hazaroon Sal Nargis Apni Beynoori Pay Roti Hey, Badi Mushkil Say Hota Hai Chamman Mein Didawar Paidal) Kashmir has always been known as the 'Land of Tulips' (Sarzameen-i-Lala Gul) and reviving these is not a big deal. There will always be many Jahangirs to do that.

Can we have another Bud Shah to redeem its environment and change the miserable living conditions of its unfortunate people?

40.

ID CARD, THE ULTIMATE IDENTITY

Sometime back I had the occasion of witnessing a theatrical performance 'Shinakhti Card' (Identity Card), a play written by Amin Bhat and staged in Abhinav Theatre, Jammu by the Mehboob Cultural Society of Baramulla under the direction of Ashraf Nagoo. The play depicts the tragedy of strife torn Kashmir where in earlier times no Government Official carried an identity card and certainly never common people. Now it is a mandatory requirement. The play based on the theft of an ID card vividly displays the tragedy of identity faced by Kashmiris.

An ID card represents not only the grave situation of security prevalent at the moment but the very identity crisis faced by a common Kashmiri. His total identity has been reduced to the possession of an ID card. In real life too there are more interesting episodes than those depicted in the play. The possession of an ID card has become a phobia with the security forces. It does not really serve the purpose of truly identifying a person. It is more or less a psychological satisfaction and gives the security personnel an excuse to stop and check every passerby or a passenger in public or private transport.

There is an awful variety of ID cards available in the

open market. However, the most preferred one is with the Government of India official logo of three lions (Trimurti) on it. This is probably because the security forces frisking and checking know and honour only this logo. The logo of the J & K Government is not entertained at all.

It had been observed during the peak of militancy that the District Magistrates, while issuing curfew passes, used the Central Government logo instead of the State logo. Even now most of the ID cards issued by some of the state agencies contain the Central logo. Some years back I had a personal experience about the credibility of the State logo while going to a security area in the company of a senior bureaucrat. At the entry gate the bureaucrat whom I was accompanying produced his State Government ID card but the guard was not impressed. Immediately I took out my Airport Entry Card which had the Central Government logo. It was at once honoured and we were allowed inside.

These days every Kashmiri before leaving his home doubly checks that he is carrying his ID card. The compulsion of carrying an ID card is so strong and overpowering that we have lost our real identity. The first visible loss of identity is the decline in the use of our native tongue. It has already been wiped out from the schools. Our young children speak English, Hindi, and Urdu but are totally ignorant of Kashmiri. We are ourselves to blame for this systematic dilution of the native tongue. The so called 'Modern' education has relegated our Kashmiri culture, including its language, into background. Even in our homes we prefer to speak to our children in English or Urdu rather than in the mother tongue. Somehow people feel an inferiority complex in conversing or discussing day to day activities in our Kashmiri language.

Along with the loss of our mother tongue, our history is also being wiped out of our minds. We do not know who we are or where we came from. Ours is the only place in the

entire sub-continent which has the earliest recorded written history duly authenticated. Alas most of us do not know anything about it! Kashmir history is not taught to our children in the schools at all. All history books prescribed in schools take us only 60 to 70 years back. Nor does most of our adult population know anything about our ancient or recent history. Not even the majority of the popular leaders know it!

Identity of a person depends on the land he comes from and its history. It is said that every blade of grass in the world has a piece of earth under it in which it has its roots and wherefrom it draws its nourishment. Without this piece of earth, the source of this blade of grass is unidentifiable and is like a straw blown by the wind from place to place! Next is the cultural identity which is evolved over generations through traditions. Slowly this unique identity of ours is also getting dissolved. It is alleged that there is a deliberate attempt from certain quarters to completely dissolve our identity and amalgamate it in the general trends on two sides whether on religious or secular basis.

However, to a great extent the trend is self-inflicted. For this we have only ourselves to blame. We consider 'Modernism' to be something superior to our historical and traditional identity. In the west, in spite of extreme modernization of the digital kind, they have not given up their traditional culture and every one takes pride in it. In our case it is reverse, the more and more we adapt to modern means, the more and more we give up our cultural values and traditions. A fellow columnist is always nostalgic about these things which were so common in our childhood. Slowly these are disappearing from the scene. Ladi Shah, Surnai, Dambali, Band Pather, and so on are slowly getting obliterated. Even our traditional dresses have been overtaken by 'mod' clothes.

There is no harm in adopting modern clothing and new ways of living but at least the traditional things should have

been preserved. In many countries swept by modernism people still use their traditional attire on festive occasions. In contrast we are totally giving it up! The only thing which is still going strong is Wazawan, the traditional Kashmiri cuisine. There have been many additions and alterations but the main structure of the cuisine is intact. We are supposed to be voracious mutton eaters. We may give up all over other unique identities but not this one.

In the long run the persistent efforts of vested interests as well as our own negligence may seem to make us lose our identity and we may be left with the identity of an ID card with a 'Trimurti' on it but there is an optimistic side too. The theatrical performance of 'Shinakhti Card' ended on a tragic note but I would like to conclude on a lighter vein.

As long as we are able to continue to speak in Kashmiri and eat the Wazawan, our unique identity will survive. It is the outsiders who will get totally baffled in the end by our unmatched capacity for survival as we have repeatedly demonstrated throughout our complex and intriguing 5,000 years history.